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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

CHILDREN'S CONSTRUCTION OF MEANING IN A THEMATIC UNIT

by

ROBERTA ANNE BAER McKAY

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

In this study I have taken a constructivist stance to look at children's construction of meaning during a thematic unit.

Within this stance, children are construed as "world makers" rather than "world receivers." World making involves creating meaning through a process of interpersonal negotiation within the social and cultural contexts of which individuals are a part. The social semiotic or system of meanings is considered to be the generator of individual meaning. The symbol systems available in the culture are seen to be the tools through which we construct and convey meaning.

The study occurred over a seven month period in a Grade Three/Four classroom. Four children were profiled in depth during a 13-week social studies theme on Alberta's pioneers. A research construct consistent with the constructivist stance was employed and may be termed naturalistic and contextual.

Through the children's classroom talk, writing, drawing, building and interacting, I was able to construct images of the meanings the children were constructing. Formal interviews were conducted with the children twice during the study, during which time we talked about their learning and the meanings they were making. The children's drawn and written products, audiotapes of their talk, audiotapes of interviews with the children and the teacher, my writing and the teacher's writing provided contexts within which I could construct images of the children's meaning making. The parents of the profile children were also interviewed along with several other parents of children in the classroom. This provided insight into the homes and the community as additional contexts within which the children constructed meaning.

Central to my meaning making in the classroom was a collaborative relationship with the teacher and the children. In the constructivist tradition, learning is social; it is collaborative. The teacher and the children became participants in the learning process, rather than "subjects" of the study. The focus was the child's point of view.

I construed the children's meaning making to be individual and unique, resulting in multiple realities of the theme. The meaning making of the teacher and myself also reflected the construction of individual realities. Meanings created were complex and reflected the social and cultural contexts of which each of us, children, teacher, researcher had been a part. Implications for classroom interaction and curriculum development are discussed.

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CHAPTER I

WORLD MAKERS OR WORLD RECEIVERS?

Introduction

The group of eight- and nine-year-old children have finished watching a film called *The Drylanders*, which chronicles the hardships and successes of a prairie farming family through settlement, prosperity and the ruinous "Dirty Thirties."

Scenario I: The teacher gathers the children together on the carpet. As they form a circle, she says, "Now there are some important things for you to learn from this film. Let's see who was really watching and listening." The teacher can be heard to ask questions such as:

- What year did the family homestead in Saskatchewan?
- What was their first house made of?
- How did the wife feel when she saw the farmland?
- What year did the drought begin? How long did it last?
- Why was this time called "The Dirty Thirties"?
- If you were Mr. Greer, would you have stayed on the farm during the drought? Give reasons for your answer.

And so the questions go, as the teacher attempts to see if the children understood the important points in the film and the children attempt to give the right answers.

Scenario II: The teacher gathers the children together on the carpet. As they form a circle, she says, "Let's talk about the most significant thing in the film, for you, at this point." The children can be heard to give responses such as:

- They didn't give up hope and their hopes came true.
- The first time the man ploughed the field, it wasn't straight.
- It was exciting when they first found the farmland.
- The houses changed from dirt to wood. What if it rained really hard when they lived in the dirt house?
- The wife was scared when she saw the land.
- When it all dried out there wasn't enough rain. Why was there a drought anyway?

And so the discussion and questions go, as the teacher and the children negotiate the meanings of the film.

These two scenarios illustrate differing constructions of learning. Scenario I, which characterizes much of present educational tradition, is based on a construction of learning as passive, and knowledge as external to the child. This transmission view of learning stems from positivistic roots. Paulo Freire calls this the "banking" concept of education and suggests that "education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat" (1974, p. 58). Knowledge is deposited by the teacher into the empty accounts of the students, to be withdrawn at a later date by the teacher. In this construct, the process of learning proceeds in a linear, sequential manner. Knowing or learning is equal to being able to "give back" knowledge presented by the teacher, who usually selects this knowledge from curriculum documents and corresponding textbook material. It is believed that what children learn is what is taught. In this view, all children learn the same things. Knowledge is seen as fixed and predetermined. Children are world receivers.

Scenario II is based on a view of learning as active, and knowledge as a personal construction. This view may be said to stem from a "constructivist" tradition. Constructivists believe that human beings actively construct personal meaning. Individual meaning is constructed in transaction with social and cultural surroundings. These two factors--that we are active personal meaning makers and social/cultural beings—are seen as essentially human characteristics. Language is a major means through which we, as human beings, construct personal meaning.

"Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry men pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other" (Freire, 1974, p. 58).

In the constructivist tradition, meanings are created in social and cultural contexts. The contexts, or surroundings and influences in which meanings are constructed, are culturally created. There is not one context but many, within which children negotiate meanings. Michael Halliday discusses constructing meaning across these multiple contexts as the building of a social semiotic, "the network of meanings that constitutes the culture" (1975, p. 121). The children in Scenario II are sharing individual meanings they have constructed in the contexts of their classroom, family and culture. In this scenario, the meanings or realities of the children are acknowledged as possible stances. Children are world makers.

The Purposes of the Research

Frank Smith suggests that education "backed the wrong horse" when it chose experimental psychology as a theoretical paradigm on which to base its actions (1988, p. 109). He argues that learning is a social activity and that to understand it we must use alternative paradigms that help to focus on what children do as they make sense of the world.

The purpose of this research is to use a constructivist stance to focus on what children do as they construct their world. The research will share explorations into the construction of meaning as it occurs in a classroom setting, focusing on the meanings that children create and the contexts within which individual meaning is constructed. The role of language, and other symbolic systems, in the construction of meaning is also a focus. Three general questions initially guided the research:

1. What individual meanings do children construct through focus on a social studies theme?
2. What are the contexts within which these meanings are constructed?
3. What is the role of language and other symbolic systems in the construction of individual meanings?

These questions were investigated in the context of a grade three/four classroom. The research itself is a meaning making endeavor and so is a mirror in that I, the researcher, am constructing and conveying meaning across multiple contexts using symbol systems. I, too, am a world maker. A research construct, consistent with the constructivist stance, was employed and may be termed naturalistic and contextual. From a constructivist stance, personal meaning is created in transaction with previously created meanings. Communication with others plays a central role in this process. For this reason, collaboration became a critical element of the research construct for this study. I, as the researcher, took a conscious and systematic stance as a learner. The researcher, as learner, is creating meaning and, like all meaning makers, needs to communicate with others. Central to my meaning making in the classroom, as I assumed the stance of a learner, was a collaborative relationship with the teacher and the children. In the constructivist tradition, learning is social; it is collaborative. As a learner in the classroom, my collaborative partners were the teacher and the children. They became participants in the learning process, rather than "subjects" of the study. This study reflects belief in a learning partnership between the teacher and the researcher, with a focus on what can be learned from children and with children.

The study occurred over a seven-month period in a grade three/four classroom. Four children were profiled in depth during a 13-week social studies theme on Alberta's pioneers. Through the children's classroom talk, writing, drawing and interacting, data were collected on the meanings the children were constructing. Interviews were conducted with the children twice during the study, at which time we talked about their learning and the meanings they were making. Data included the children's drawn and written products, audiotapes of their talk, audiotapes of interviews with the children and the teacher, observations in the form of field notes, and written commentary from the teacher on my field notes, as well as elaboration of some of her thoughts on the collaborative relationship and the context of her classroom. The parents of the profile children were also interviewed as well as several other parents of children in the classroom. These data provided insight into homes and the community as additional contexts within which the children constructed meaning.

Constructing a Constructivist Stance—Some Personal Context

My choice of a constructivist stance for this study is an interesting study in itself, for as all individual meaning making must, it developed within many contexts over many years. And because individual meaning is continually being created in transaction with previously created meanings, it is impossible to know exactly when I began constructing a constructivist stance. Bruner says that "much of the process of education consists of being able to distance oneself in some way from what one knows by being able to reflect on one's own knowledge. . . . It is this that permits one to reach higher ground, this process of objectifying in language or image what one has thought and then turning around on it and reconsidering it" (1986, pp. 127-9).

Reflecting on my 15 years in education, I can highlight some of the experiences that have contributed to my constructivist stance. My early teaching experiences with elementary children left me with feelings of frustration. I coordinated three reading groups, corrected the workbooks, handed out the worksheets in social studies and health. But something was wrong. So many children had problems doing the work and others were bored and always finished. Believing that this was not the fault of the children, I was left with blaming myself. I decided to return to university to learn more. Perhaps there were secrets to teaching I had missed in my undergraduate training. As a graduate student in language arts, I read Britton and Halliday, and delved into the notion of integrated language arts. Upon my return to a school district, I was asked to act as the coordinating project teacher on a social studies curriculum development project. The Alberta social studies curriculum was a unique and daring experiment, a curriculum based on a process of social inquiry into issues. It was a curriculum that appealed to me and one which I was able, 10 years later, to reconstrue as constructivist. I worked with social studies curriculum development for 10 years, developing curriculum guides and resources, teaching teachers about social inquiry, unaware that I was immersed in the constructivist tradition.

During those years, I was aware that the underpinnings of an integrated approach to language and language learning and the underpinnings of a social inquiry approach were compatible in many ways. I wanted to draw on my experiences and background in language and in social studies when I returned to a university setting to pursue doctoral studies. Through my reading, writing and talking with many people, I came to re-cognize, to know again, a theme in my endeavors as an educator—a belief in the power of human beings as creators of meaning—a constructivist theme.

And that is not the end of the meaning making, for just as it is impossible to say exactly where and when meaning begins, it is impossible to say exactly where and when it ends. As I continue to think and write about the classroom experiences, as I reread Britton, Bruner and Halliday, as I talk with my advisors and colleagues, I reflect further on the constructivist theme. Now, upon the completion of this dissertation, I find myself reading text I have written over three years. During this writing process, and partially as a result of it, my meanings have continued to evolve. My current constructivist stance is difference from what it was three years ago. I now see distinctions I did not when I began writing. My dilemma with the written text becomes a question of whether to rewrite the text in order to reflect one version of constructivism from beginning to end. I have chosen not to rewrite my text, but to acknowledge that my current stance has and is evolving through multiple contexts. All of these contexts, through the years, have "joined me to the possible worlds that provide the landscape for thinking" about the constructivist stand and ultimately "about the human condition, the human condition as it exists in the culture in which I live" (Bruner, 1986, p. 128).

The Reader as World Maker

You, the reader are also creating a text, for reading too, is a world-making activity. Each of you will respond quite differently to my text. These differences are not just a reflection of different prior knowledge. Within a constructivist stance, reading is not simply adding previous information to new information obtained from the text. Reading is the creation of individual texts within the readers' heads, shaped by the unique social and cultural contexts of which each reader has been a part. "Reading does not simply involve a cognitive process of merging prior knowledge and text content, with the aid of specific reading skills. Each reading experience is a new event, deeply rooted in our social being and culture" (Cairney & Langbien, 1989, p. 566).

You, my reader, are also a world maker.

CHAPTER II

NEGOTIATING THE MEANING OF THE CONSTRUCTIVIST STANCE

Introduction

Constructivism is a theory about the nature of mind. Bruner traces the constructivist stance, that is, what exists is a product of what is thought, to the philosopher Immanuel Kant. The constructivist stance postulates that through the human mind's capacity to represent through symbols, we create or construct reality. There are differing views within the philosophical realm as to the "existence" of an aboriginal "real" world. Kant argued that by virtue of having human minds, we all have certain a priori knowledge. Bruner turns to Nelson Goodman (1984, 1978, 1976), a modern American philosopher, whose central thesis of constructivism is that "contrary to common sense there is no unique 'real world' that pre-exists and is independent of human mental activity and human symbolic language; that what we call the world is a product of some mind whose symbolic procedures construct the world" (Bruner, 1986, p. 95). Constructivism as a philosophical theory construes reality or meaning as actively created by the human mind through its capacity to symbolize. "We do not operate on some sort of aboriginal reality independent of our own minds or the minds of those who precede or accompany us" (Bruner, 1986, p. 96).

The Constructivist Tradition

Constructivism appears across many disciplines. It might be said that there is a tradition of scholars or authorities in a variety of fields who look at their world from the constructivist stance. Janet Emig (1983) points out that these people form an intellectual tradition because of the concepts, precepts, assumptions and methods they share. The constructivist tradition is multidisciplinary; it may be found in clinical, cognitive and developmental psychology, cultural anthropology, linguistics, philosophy, the arts, and science. George Kelly, an American clinical psychologist, who wrote on the psychology of personal constructs, suggests that each of these fields or realms is a widely shared or public system of constructs. Each is an alternate way of construing the world, of looking at events and making sense of them. Different realms or disciplines can look at the same set of events and construe them differently. Realms also overlap, according to Kelly. This became evident in my own meaning making as I began to construct links among various authors and disciplines.

I first encountered the constructivist stance through the realm of pedagogy and the writings of James Britton, a British educator. In his book, *Language and Learning*, Britton linked the role of language and the meaning-making capacities of children with educational practices related to the importance of talk and writing in meaning making. Britton drew on the work of George Kelly, who used a constructivist stance in developing a theory of personality. Kelly attributes a seminal idea in his theory of personal constructs, that we understand the events of the world by anticipating them, to the educational philosopher John Dewey.

From the tradition of scholars in a variety of fields, I will review in this chapter those who have been influential in my negotiation of meaning about the constructivist stance.

Constructive Alternativism

A psychology of personal constructs was formulated by George Kelly as a theory of personality. Kelly was a clinical psychologist. Through viewing humankind as capable of constructing individual meaning, he created a hopeful personality theory, "for it implies that man, to the extent that he is able to construe his circumstances, can find for himself freedom from their domination. It implies also that man can enslave himself with his own ideas and then win his freedom again by reconstruing his life" (Kelly, 1955, p. 21).

Kelly termed his philosophical position *constructive alternativism*, stating that, "we assume that all of our present interpretations of the universe are subject to revision or replacement" (1955, p. 15). Within this philosophical position, Kelly stated that the universe is really existing, integral, and exists by happening, never doubling back on itself, but flowing onward through time. Kelly distinguishes life as one of the parts of the universe which, to make sense, needs to be seen in the perspective of time. Unlike the universe, which exists by happening, for Kelly, life involves the representation or construction of a reality on the part of human beings. He emphasizes this representation or construction as a creative capacity as opposed to a merely responsive one. Because it is creative, it is individual; therefore there are an infinite number of ways of construing the universe. Kelly states that because life is constructed, this is not to say that it is not real, that our thoughts, constructions are not real. He says that our "construction systems are also real, though they may be biased in their representations. Thus, both nature and human nature are phenomenologically existent" (1955, p. 43).

The next issues to be discussed with respect to the philosophical position of constructive alternativism are whether one construction system is as appropriate as the next and how people choose among varying constructions.

It has been stated that human beings have the creative capacity to construe the universe and that different people construe it in different ways. Because the universe is there and always happening, it goes on no matter what constructions are placed upon it, or for that matter, it goes on whether any constructions are placed upon it all. The constructions individuals place on the universe are real to them. Kelly states that some constructions are undoubtedly better than others; what distinguishes them is their usefulness in helping a person anticipate the course of events that make up the universe.

> Constructs cannot be tossed about willy-nilly without a person's getting into difficulty. While there are always alternative constructions available, some of them are definitely poor implements. The yardstick to use is the specific predictive efficiency of each alternative construct and the over-all predictive efficiency of the system of which it would, if adopted, become a part. (Kelly, 1955, p. 15)

Kelly suggests that an absolute construction of the universe is not feasible. What we as human beings do is continually use our present constructs to predict events to come, in a universe that keeps happening through time. "Each day's experience calls for the consolidation of some aspect of our outlook, revision of some, and outright abandonment of others" (1955, p. 14). The happenings or events of the universe do not belong to any construction system; the same event may be construed "simultaneously and profitably" within various construction systems. Kelly cautions that we must be careful not to view systems as mutually exclusive; for example, saying that a certain event is a psychological one and not a physiological or sociological one. Rather, he reminds us that any event may be viewed in any of its aspects. He further states that while events may be viewed from psychological, physiological and sociological perspectives simultaneously, no one system is obliged to account for the other. He suggests that since we do not have a universal system of constructs, but rather a series of miniature systems, each with its own realm and limited range; that these systems can only be applied to the universe of events abstractly, rather than concretely.

Constructive alternativism constructs its theory on the assumption that all of our present interpretations of the universe are subject to revision or replacement. It is not the events of the universe that rule us, but rather it is our interpretations of them.

> Ultimately a man sets the measure of his own freedom and his own bondage by the level at which he chooses to establish his convictions. The man who orders his life in terms of many special and inflexible convictions about temporary matters makes himself the victim of circumstances. Each little prior conviction that is not open to review is a hostage he gives to fortune; it determines whether the events of tomorrow will bring happiness or misery. The man whose prior convictions encompass a broad perspective, and are cast in terms of principles rather than rules, has a much better chance of discovering those alternatives which will lead eventually to his emancipation. (Kelly, 1955, p. 23)

In summary, constructive alternativism offers some useful constructs for viewing the events of the universe, and more specifically for informing my research stance. Of particular importance is the view of construction systems as actively created, individual, interpretive, open to revision, tentative and able to be reviewed, revised or replaced, depending on their predictive usefulness in helping us make sense of our world. Also important is the view that although we cannot ever crawl inside someone else's construction system and see how the world is viewed, we can begin to understand others' constructs by making inferences from what we see the individual doing, as opposed to making inferences about the individual on the basis of what we have seen others doing. In other words, understanding the meanings people make must begin at the level of the individual; what is the meaning of this event in the life of this person. This view allows us to contemplate the existence of multiple realities, the question of reality building, and the meaning of being a world maker.

Personal Construct Theory

Based on his constructive alternativism philosophy, Kelly formulated his Personal Construct Theory which, as its fundamental postulate states, "a person's processes are psychologically channelized by the ways he anticipates events" (Kelly, 1955, p. 46). "Anticipate" is used to indicate that the ways in which we view the world are influenced by previously held psychological constructs. Through these previously held constructs, we seek predictive value in events and experiences. We strive for personal meaning as we react to our environment, as we see it. This means that we do not react directly to our environment; our responses are mediated by already existing psychological constructs.

Bannister and Fransella describe Kelly's use of the metaphor of a scientist to explain human behavior: "he is saying that we have our own view of the world (our theory), our own expectations of what will happen in given situations (our hypotheses) and that our behavior is our continual experiment with life" (1980, p. 17).

Experience, in Kelly's view, is made up of the "successive construing of events," the continuous framing and reframing of what happens, with the outcome of the process being a person's "construction system." Kelly stresses that experience is not merely the succession of events themselves, but rather "the making something out of them." For Kelly, this involves the discovery of replicative themes. "It is when man begins to see the orderliness in a sequence of events that he begins to experience them" (Kelly, 1955, p. 74).

This view of experience has profound implications for a definition of learning. Britton suggests that for Kelly, "learning is not a special kind of human behavior, *but behavior at its most typically human*" (Britton, 1982, p. 157). Kelly states that by virtue of his basic postulate and specifically by accepting the experience corollary, "a person's construction system varies as he successively construes the replication of events. . . . learning is assumed to take place" (1955, p. 75).

> The burden of our assumption is that learning is not a special case of psychological process: it is synonymous with any and all psychological processes. It is not something that happens to a person on occasion; it is what makes him a person in the first place. (Kelly, 1955, p. 75)

It must be noted that Kelly did not intend his personal construct theory to be seen only as concerning "thinking" or "purely rational man." "It is also taken to apply to that which is commonly called emotional or affective and to that which has to do with action or conation" (1955, p. 130). According to Bannister and Fransella, Kelly did not accept the construct of thinking versus feeling. "So a construct is not a 'thought' or a 'feeling'; it is a discrimination. It is a part of the way you stand towards your world as a complete person" (1980, p. 32). A construct then is a stance, a way of being in the world, a posture toward the world, an anticipation of the way the world will be.

Kelly did not neglect the social and cultural contexts within the theory of personal constructs. He construed culture as "similarity in what members of the group expect of each other" (1955, p. 93) and suggested cultural similarity between persons is then a matter of similarity in what they perceive is expected of them. This brings the focus of culture back to the individual and the way experience is construed. People belong to the same cultural group because they construe their experience in similar ways.

Kelly suggests that this view of cultural similarity does not account for positive social interactions between and among people and suggests that a further notion is necessary. For people to be able to get along harmoniously, each must have some understanding of the other; in other words, interpersonal understanding is based on being able to construe the construction process of another to some extent. Kelly stresses that understanding someone else's construction system is not the same as adhering to the same construction system. To summarize, in personal construct theory cultural similarity means construing experiences in similar ways. Interpersonal relationships are governed at the level of one's ability to understand the construction system of another, not necessarily to adhere to similar construction systems. These two ideas are important for examining the contexts in which an individual constructs meaning.

The Constructivism of Jerome Bruner

The idea of mind as an active creator of meaning has found much acceptance within cognitive psychology. Jerome Bruner suggests, however, that many psychologists "like to think of worlds that people create as 'representing' a real or aboriginal world" (1986, p. 98). This is a point of departure within psychology, and distinguishes Bruner's current views from those of people such as Piaget, who Bruner claims had a constructivist epistemological theory but "clung nonetheless to a residual naive realism. Constructions for him were representations of an autonomous real world to which the growing child had to fit or 'accommodate'" (1986, p. 89).

In his book, *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*, Bruner argues for a constructivist view of reality, based on the work of Nelson Goodman. The implication of his view is that world making involves the construction of worlds "out of other worlds, created by others, which we have taken as given" (1986, p. 96). Bruner stresses the social and cultural contexts of meaning construction, acknowledging that as individuals we construct personal meaning from meanings that are "givens" in the social and cultural environment into which we are born. This is similar to Kelly's view that constructs are formed through previously held constructs.

Bruner uses the construct of "transaction" to discuss how meanings are developed. Transactions, as defined by Bruner, are "those dealings which are premised on a mutual sharing of assumptions and beliefs about how the world is, how mind works, what we are up to, and how communication should proceed" (1986, p. 57). In terms of development, Bruner suggests that the human infant has a "biological readiness based on a primitive appreciation of other minds" (1986, p. 67). The transactional process is then reinforced and enriched by the development of language and operates within the range of possibilities for the construction of meanings available in the culture. "Indeed, in time the young entrant into the culture comes to define his own intentions and even his own history in terms of the characteristic cultural dramas in which he plays a part—at first family dramas, but later the ones that shape the expanding circle of his activities outside the family" (1986, p. 67).

Bruner questions theories of child development that picture young children as lacking skills of transaction. He cites some of his own studies on growth in human infancy, particularly those related to the development of human language and its precursors, which, he believes, suggest that very young children do have some appreciation of others' minds. Early pointing, the ability to follow another's line of regard, and a sense of mutuality in action are precursors of linguistic reference that Bruner cites as evidence that very young children possess some of the skills of transaction. He further points out that with the acquisition of language, children have no trouble in mastering expressions that require an appreciation of the interpersonal context in which they are used. Use of such words as "I" and "here" and "there," for example, depends on an appreciation of who is speaking and in what context.

Bruner argues that even young children have the capacity to take the perspective of others and that the classic position on the egocentrism of young children needs to be examined. He suggests that his research and the research of people such as Margaret Donaldson point out that "it is not that the child does not have the capacity to take another's perspective, but rather that he cannot do so without understanding the situation in which he is operating" (1986, p. 68). When he does not understand the structure of events, then an egocentric framework is adopted.

In addition to the construct of perspective, Bruner asks us also to examine three other constructs related to the notion on egocentrism: privacy, unmediated conceptualism, and tripartism. The classic position on egocentrism is that there is a self that develops independently of culture. Bruner suggests that the concepts of a "private self" and a "public self" are functions of a culture's conventions, that notions of what is public and private differ even at the level of individual families. In the classic view of egocentrism, the child is seen as gaining knowledge of the world through direct encounters with that world. Bruner suggests that in fact most of our encounters with the world are mediated through negotiation with others. With respect to tripartism, Bruner asks us to examine the notion that cognition, affect, and action are separate, with cognition developing last. Bruner believes that where culture is acknowledged as the forum within which meanings are created, cognition, affect and action form a unified whole. One of the functions of a culture is to keep these aspects "related and together in those images, stories, and the like by which our experience is given coherence and cultural relevance" (1986, p. 69).

For Bruner, culture provides the means for transacting with others. His view of culture is "implicit and only semi-connected knowledge of the world from which, through negotiation, people arrive at satisfactory ways of acting in given contexts" (1986, p. 65).

If one accepts the constructivist view presented by Bruner, that is, what exists is a product of thought, there is no aboriginal or ultimate reality, "then, no one 'world' is more 'real' than all others, none is ontologically privileged as the unique real world" (1986, p. 96). Differences such as art versus science and objectivity versus subjectivity become differences in how reality is constructed. Bruner suggests that for Goodman the issue becomes the differences in the constructional activities that make such world views. For Goodman, the differences rest in the use of symbol systems. He suggests that arts and sciences have a common cognitive function as ways of knowing the world; their differences lie in how and in what symbol systems are used to come to that knowing. Based on these ideas of Goodman, Bruner discusses the notion of multiple realities.

> We know the world in different ways, from different stances, and each of the ways in which we know it produces different structures or representations, or indeed, "realities." As we grow to adulthood (at

> least in Western culture), we become increasingly adept at seeing the same set of events from *multiple* perspectives or stances and at entertaining the results as, so to speak, alternative possible worlds. (1986, p. 109)

Bruner suggests that the human capacity for taking multiple perspectives is among the skills of transaction, and must be present in some form in order for children to master language. For Bruner, the difference between children and adults lies not in competence, but in performance. The child "simply does not have as grand a collection of scripts and scenarios and event schemas as adults do" (1986, p. 68).

Language is a major symbolic form through which transactions, the understandings of others' minds, takes place. It enables us to generate sentences and is our principal form of reference and meaning. Bruner says these characteristics of language, syntax, reference, meaning and the constitutiveness or capacity of language to create realities of its own imply "that learning how to use language involves both learning the culture and learning how to express intentions in congruence with the culture" (1986, p. 65).

From the constructivist stance Bruner takes on the development of meaning through transactions and the role of language and culture. He sets forth this negotiatory, hermeneutic or transactional view:

> So if one asks the question, where is the meaning of social concepts —in the world, in the meaner's head, or in interpersonal negotiation —one is compelled to answer that it is in the last of these. Meaning is what we can agree upon or at least accept as a working basis for seeking agreement about the concept at hand . . . . Social realities are not bricks that we trip over or bruise ourselves on when we kick at them, but the meanings we achieve by the sharing of human cognition. (1986, p. 122)

In this view, Bruner suggests that culture is a forum in which we negotiate and renegotiate meanings. "It is the forum aspect of a culture that gives its participants a role in constantly making and remaking the culture—an *active* role as participants rather than as performing spectators who play out their canonical roles according to rule when the appropriate cues occur" (1986, p. 123). Education, says Bruner "should also partake of the spirit of a forum, of negotiation, of the recreating of meaning."

From this constructivist stance, Bruner emphasizes learning as a communal activity, a sharing of the culture. He states that he has reconstrued his constructs about discovery learning.

> My model of the child in those days was very much in the tradition of the solo child mastering the world by representing it to himself in his own terms. In the intervening years I have come increasingly to recognize that most learning in most settings is a communal activity, a sharing of the culture. It is not just that the child must make his knowledge his own, but that he must make it his own in a community of those who share his sense of belonging to a culture. (1986, p. 127)

It is from this conviction of culture as the forum in which meanings are created that Bruner is able to argue for the "rightness" of certain interpretations of the world. Rightness is not judged by correspondence to some aboriginal reality, rather by human intentionality. Bruner stresses that because the construction of meaning reflects human intentions, that meaning must be judged for its rightness within the context of human intentions. We always make meaning within the contexts of the meanings that surround us. Bruner says this is not a "relativistic picnic" (1986, p. 159). "In the end, it is the transaction of meaning by human beings, human beings armed with reason and buttressed by the faith that sense can be made and remade, that makes human culture—and by human culture, I do not mean surface consensus" (1986, p. 159).

Constructivism in Cultural Anthropology

Bruner draws on cultural anthropology, particularly the work of Clifford Geertz, for a constructivist view of culture. Geertz construes culture as a "set of symbolic devices for controlling behaviour" (1979, p. 47) and suggests that culture provides the link between "what men are intrinsically capable of becoming and what they actually, one by one, in fact become." In this view culture is not concrete behaviour patterns—traditions, habits and customs, but rather "plans, recipes, rules, instructions" for the governing of behavior. These plans, recipes, rules are the symbol systems of the culture in which any particular individual is born. As such, they are largely given and any particular individual uses them "to put a construction upon the events through which he lives, to orient himself within 'the ongoing course of experienced things,' to adopt a vivid phrase of John Dewey's" (1979, p. 43).

Geertz argues in favor of an interactive view between physical evolution and cultural development, suggesting that "there is no such thing as human nature independent of culture" (1979, p. 45). The development of culture is seen as a central ingredient in the development of human beings as we know them today. From this view, the interaction of nature and nurture, Geertz argues against looking for cultural universals to explain human behavior, and urges a "descent into detail."

> If we want to discover what man amounts to, we can only find it in what men are: and what men are, above all other things, is various . . . . Becoming human is becoming individual, and we become individual under the guidance of cultural patterns, historically created systems of meaning in terms of which we give form, order, point, and direction to our lives. And the cultural patterns involved are not general but specific. (1979, p. 47)

Polanyi and Constructivism

The scientist-philosopher Michael Polanyi, as part of the constructivist tradition, insists that people make their own knowledge; knowledge is personal. He bases his arguments on the idea that there is no such thing as impersonal knowledge; the knower is inextricably bound up in what she knows through active personal participation in both the discovery and validation of knowledge. He suggests that we must modify our concept of knowing to recognize that knowledge is personal rather than impersonal and outside of the individual. "I regard knowing as an active comprehension of the things known, an action that requires skill" (1978, p. vii). Polanyi believes that the personal participation of the knower in all acts of understanding does not equal subjectivity.

> Comprehension is neither an arbitrary act nor a passive experience, but a responsible act claiming universal validity. Such knowing is indeed *objective* in the sense of establishing contact with a hidden reality; a contact that is defined as the condition for anticipating an indeterminate range of yet unknown (and perhaps yet inconceivable) true implications. It seems reasonable to describe this fusion of the personal and the objective as Personal Knowledge. (1978, p. viii)

Polanyi argues that we know with our whole selves, that making sense of the whole of our experience is a life-long endeavor we pursue because we are human. We learn with our whole selves, we respond to the whole of our experience. Polanyi makes an essential place for the role of "passion" in constructing our personal knowledge. Using scientific knowledge as his example, he argues that only passionate preoccupation with a problem can elicit discovery and the will to convince others of its significance and validity.

In addition to arguing that knowledge is personal and requires "a passionate contribution of the person knowing what is being known" (1978, p. viii), Polanyi makes a distinction between tacit and explicit knowledge.

> Things of which we are focally aware can be explicitly identified; but no knowledge can be made wholly explicit. For one thing, the meaning of langauge when in use, lies in its tacit component; for another, to use language involves actions of our body of which we have only a subsidiary awareness. Hence, tacit knowing is more fundamental than explicit knowing: we can know more than we can tell and we can tell nothing without relying on our awareness of things we may not be able to tell. (1978, p. x)

Language, Thought and Learning in the Constructivist Tradition

James Britton says,

> Events take place and are gone; it is the representation that lasts and accumulates and undergoes successive modifications. It is from the representation we make that we gain a sense of a continuing existence in a world that has a past and a future, a world that remains in existence whether we are there to prove it or not. (1985, p. 18)

The human ability to represent is what allows us to hold and accumulate experience. Our accumulated representations or constructs mediate between who we are and our direct experience. The act of representing is part of what makes us uniquely human.

Language is one of our key methods of representation—and for most of us, as Britton says, the "means by which all ways of representing combine to work efficiently together" (1985, p. 19). The successive construing of events takes place not only in moment by moment encounters with the actual, but also as we use language to go back over events, interpreting them and attempting to make different sense, new sense, out of them. We are not only seekers of meaning, we are seekers of forms to represent that meaning. Language is one of our most powerful forms of representation.

Britton argues that we use language to represent our experiences as participant and as spectator. In the participant role, language is used to help build our world representation; in the spectator role, language allows us to go "back over," and reflect on the meaning and significance of events. Britton discusses two aspects of our personal construct system—a "knowledge aspect" and a "value aspect." The knowledge aspect relates to how we use language in the participant role to accumulate a world picture. The value aspect relates to how we use language in the spectator role to reflect on experience and decide how, or if, we care about it. Both are essential to the unity of our personal construct system; to how we know. It is essentially what Polanyi is saying about the critical role of "passion" in the construction of personal knowledge.

Through talk we are able to go back over events and make sense of them in a way that we are unable to when they are occurring. "This is to work upon our representation of the particular experience and our world representation in order to incorporate the one into the other more fully" (Britton, 1985, p. 19).

We also use talk as a means of modifying each other's representations. Britton suggests that we greatly affect each other's representations, to the extent that much of our world representation we build and share with others of our culture. I believe that this is what Bruner is getting at when he talks about the interpersonal negotiation of meaning. Viewed from a constructivist tradition, we see that language is both social and intensely individual. As Louise Rosenblatt suggests, a transactional view applies especially well to linguistic activity. She believes that although language is social, its special essence is that it must be internalized by each individual, "with all the special overtones that each unique person and unique situation entail" (1978, p. 20).

L. S. Vygotsky states clearly that language is a social fact. "Signs and words serve children first and foremost as a means of social contact with other people" (1978, p. 28). He then discusses how this *inter*personal process is transformed into a *intra*personal one.

> Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice; first on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relations between human individuals. (1978, p. 57)

These higher functions include language and thought. Vygotsky views language and thought as having different roots, which up to a certain point follow different lines, and then converge, "whereupon thought becomes visible and speech rational" (1981, p. 44). Of great significance is Vygotsky's statement that:

> Thought development is determined by language, i.e., by the linguistic tools of thought and by the sociocultural experience of the child. Essentially, the development of inner speech depends on outside factors; the development of logic in the child, as Piaget's studies have shown, is a direct function of his socialized speech. The child's intellectual growth is contingent on his mastering the social means of thought, that is, language. (1981, p. 51)

The role of language in developing thought is crucial.

Vygotsky also has contributed to our view of learning. He recognizes, along with Dewey, that learning grows out of experience and that learning and development are interrelated from the child's first day of life. He goes on to suggest that "human learning presupposes a specific social nature and a process by which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them" (1978, p. 88). Vygotsky hypothesizes that "developmental processes do not coincide with learning processes";

rather "the developmental process lags behind the learning process," resulting in what he terms "zones of proximal development" (1978, p. 90). The zone of proximal development is actually the zone of learning; it is where the child or learner can engage with experience with the guidance or collaborative assistance of adults or more capable peers. I believe Dewey makes a similar point when he says:

> Basing education upon personal experience may mean more multiplied and more intimate contacts between the mature and the immature than ever existed in the traditional school, and consequently more, rather than less guidance by others. (1963, p. 21)

He suggests that to maximize the principle of learning through experience and make use of guidance by others "requires a well thought-out philosophy of the social factors that operate in the constitution of individual experience" (1963, p. 21).

The constructivist perspective on language, thought and learning provides particular views on the nature of written language. Vygotsky (1978) has suggested, in "The prehistory of written language," that there is a natural learning process that begins with gesture and moves through the development of symbolism in play and drawing to the "basic discovery—namely that one can draw not only things but also speech" (1978, p. 115). He hypothesizes further that the "understanding of written language is first effected through spoken language, but gradually this path is curtailed and spoken language disappears as the intermediate link" (1978, p. 116). Written language becomes another symbolic form of the representation or construction of our experience.

Frank Smith (1982) also places written language in a broad cultural context and suggests that writing is found because it is useful, both from a cultural and personal perspective. He discusses speech and writing as alternate forms of language and states that "all of the uses to which language can be put apply to these alternate forms, to both writing and speech" (1982, p. 15). Smith believes that the choice of which form we use, speech, writing, or "nonlanguage means" depends on the situation and the context. He does however posit one important difference between writing and speech and that is "writing can also separate the producer from him or herself, so that one's own ideas can be examined more objectively. Writers can look at the language they produce in a way that speakers cannot. Writing is a tangible construction" (1982, p. 16). The importance of this for Smith is in the interaction between writer and what is written, during the act of writing; "writing is helping us to organize and develop the possibilities of our own minds; writing can be an extension and reflection of all of our efforts to develop and express ourselves in the world around us, to make sense of that world, and to impose order upon it" (1982, p. 16). In the constructivist tradition written language is a powerful tool for constructing the possibilities of our own minds.

Within the realm of linguistics, Michael Halliday takes a constructivist stance on the development of language. Like Geertz, he rejects strictly biological or strictly cultural stances on human development, specifically language development, and instead argues in favor of language development as an interactive process. Halliday acknowledges the biological foundations of language, but asserts that language development is an aspect of a social system. He constructs the view that the social system is a semiotic or a system of meanings.

> The linguistic semiotic—that is semantics—is one form of the realization of the social semiotic. There are many other symbolic systems through which the meanings of the culture are expressed: art forms, social structures and social institutions, educational and legal systems, and the like. But in the development process language is the primary one. A child's construction of a semantic system and his construction of a social system take place side by side, as two aspects of a single unitary process. (1975, p. 121)

In this view, the child builds up a potential for exchanging and modifying the meanings available in the system. For Halliday, the explanation of how children construct reality through the medium of language rests within the social system, which Halliday suggests is a higher level semiotic than the cognitive system.

> The social semiotic is the system of meanings that defines or constitutes the culture; and the linguistic system is one mode of realization of these meanings. The child's task is to construct the system of meanings that represent his own model of social reality. This process takes place inside his own head; it is a cognitive process. But it takes place in contexts of social interaction, and there is no way it can take place except in these contexts. As well as being a cognitive process, the learning of the mother tongue is also an interactive process. It takes the form of the continued exchange of meanings between the self and others. The act of meaning is a social act. (1975, p. 139)

Halliday stresses that the social context is a generator of meanings, not an external condition on the learning of meaning. In other words, there are not external meanings to be found in the social system, but the social system is the context within which we create meanings; there is a meaning potential there. Although the meaning potential is derived from the culture, Halliday says we are not "prisoners of our cultural semiotic"; we can learn to move outside of it, but it "requires a positive act of semiotic reconstruction" (1975, p. 140). He states that we can learn because the language of our mother tongue corresponds to a *possible* way of perceiving and interpreting the environment. Like Bruner, Halliday states that the environment is a social construct that consists of meanings derived from human interaction, rather than consisting of things, processes and relations. Learning becomes the linking of "semantic categories and the semiotic properties of the situation" (1975, p. 140) rather than the linking of semantic categories and objects and events of the external world. For Halliday, the point is that "the reality in which meaning takes place is a social reality into which the external environment enters through its significance for interaction, and is embedded in contexts of evaluation, argument, manipulation and other social acts" (1975, p. 141).

Halliday proposes a functional view of language, where language is viewed as the major symbol system through which the social system is created and expressed. The child learns the social system of the culture by using language; Halliday points out that this happens through "the small change of everyday speech, the casual linguistic interaction of the home, the street and the neighbourhood" (1975, p. 120).

Halliday sees learning to read and write as extensions of the functional potential of language. He states that those children who don't learn to read and write, "by and large, are children to whom it doesn't make sense; to whom the functional extension that these media provide has not been made clear, or does not match up with their own expectations of what language is for" (1978, p. 57). Halliday draws a distinction between function and use, saying that initially they are the same but as a child develops there is a transition to the adult language,

> a language that is still functional in its origins but where the concept of 'function' has undergone a significant change: it is no longer simply synonymous with 'use', but has become much more abstract, a kind of 'metafunction' through which all the innumerable concrete uses of language in which the adult engages are given symbolic expression in a systematic and finite form. (1978, p. 22)

Constructivism in Education

The educational philosopher, John Dewey, argued from a constructivist stance and in fact, George Kelly attributes a seminal idea in his theory of personal constructs—that we understand the events of the world by anticipating them—to Dewey. In *Experience and Education*, Dewey called for education where there is "an intimate and necessary relation between the processes of actual experience and education" (1963, p. 20). Dewey meant that we learn through personal experience; he argued for a "theory of experience" where, "I assume that amid all uncertainties there is one permanent frame of reference: namely, the organic connection between education and personal experience" (1963, p. 25). Dewey recognized that learning was very like living.

Over the last 20 years, there has been growing support for a constructivist stance of how we view the language development of children in relation to their learning before they enter school and after. Britton (1985), Halliday (1978), and Margaret Meek (1984) have been influential from Great Britain. In the United States, Ken and Yetta Goodman (1986), Jerome Harste (1984), and Donald Graves (1984) and his colleagues have looked at what children do when they read and write and argue for practices in schools that facilitate children's construction of knowledge. Based on the work of Vygotsky and current developmental psychologists, like Jerome Bruner, these educators recognize learning as social, and language as the major symbol system through which we negotiate meanings with others. The April 1989 issue of *The English Journal* features articles on the importance of speaking and listening in English classrooms; the editors comment on the recurring themes apparent in the manuscripts submitted. Among these recurring themes, they identify classrooms being conceived as "sites for the social construction of knowledge rather than the one-way transmission of knowledge from teacher to student"; learning being seen as collaborative, including the idea of the classroom as a community of apprenticing learners; the relationships between learner and teacher becoming less traditionally defined, as students see themselves as capable of constructing their knowledge and teachers see themselves as researchers, learners, and models; and a growing recognition of the importance of talk to reading and writing and the construction of knowledge (1989, p. 39).

Constructivism as a theoretical perspective in education has influenced social studies traditions. The reflective inquiry tradition stems from a constructivist stance. This tradition however, is not widespread in North American social studies practice; the constructivist view of learning is only an emerging research focus.

Bonnie Shapiro (1987) states that a review of recent literature on children's science learning reveals that the study of the child's viewpoint is currently at the forefront of interest in science education research. This "alternative frameworks" emphasis attempts to understand the child's view of the nature of phenomena. Most of the research in alternative frameworks attempts to discover the notions children hold about phenomena prior to school instruction. Shapiro suggests that within the alternative frameworks orientation, differing perspectives exist. She identifies a constructivist stance as one perspective within the research orientation. In such an "interpretive framework orientation," the child's existing knowledge is acknowledged not as a barrier to understanding, but as "framework leading to an opportunity for students to re-interpret information" (1987, p. 54).

A constructivist stance is also to be found in some recent research on children's understanding of mathematics. Peterson, Fennema and Carpenter (1989) suggest that recent research in cognitive psychology which suggests that learners construct their knowledge by making connections between existing knowledge and new information should be informing classroom practices in mathematics. They cite research in children's learning of mathematics that acknowledges the child's informal knowledge and "invented mathematics strategies." Using interview strategies and studying how children talk about mathematical problems, this research looks at mathematics learning from the child's point of view.

Common to constructivist stances in education, in fields such as language learning, science, social studies, mathematics and the arts is an acknowledgement that children learn outside of the formal instructional setting of the school and that the knowledge they possess is valuable when viewed as the framework upon which they construct future meanings. What has not been acknowledged and explored fully in the subject areas, is the role of symbol systems, particularly language, in the construction of meaning. While this has been explored in great depth in the area of language learning, knowledge from this arena of study is only just beginning to be married with understanding of how children learn in particular content areas. Studies are needed which focus on learning, what children learn in school, how they learn, and the role that language plays in that learning.

The Construct of Subject Matter

From a constructivist perspective, knowledge is a human construction. Kelly suggests that:

> Man creates his own ways of seeing the world in which he lives; the world does not create them for him. He builds constructs and tries them on for size. His constructs are sometimes organized into systems, groups of constructs which embody subordinate and superordinate relationships. The same events can often be viewed in the light of two or more systems. Yet the events do not belong to any system. (1955, p. 12)

Pope and Keen emphasize that "Kelly himself took great delight in raising the ambiguity of categorical systems," including those that sought to categorize his own Personal Construct Theory (1981, p. 25). School "subjects" viewed from this perspective, become human constructs that are fluid, questionable, open to reconstruction. Barnes states that "school subjects are not self-constituting; they were built by men in the course of trying to make sense of some aspect of the world" (1985, p. 155). Torbe construes this slightly differently when he suggests that the school subjects represent "different ways of inspecting, organizing and extrapolating from the raw material" or "tangle of experiences of all kinds" (1986, p. 137).

In this view, each learner must actively construe the subject matter as it becomes personal knowledge. The learner is a "world maker" rather than a "world receiver" (Barnes, 1985, p. 157). Teaching and learning become a process of negotiation where it is a given that the learner has to construct his or her own understanding. In school, the world of subject matter, established knowledge, confronts the world of the child. Hull (1985) suggests that this social encounter may become a monologue or a dialogue, depending on whether the world of the child is seen as intrusive or as constitutive; is the child a world receiver or a world maker? Hull posits a dialogic relation that takes into account the questions and ideas from the child's world as a possible bridge to the world of subject matter.

Negotiating the Meaning of the Constructivist Stance: My Text

This chapter has presented a mosaic of the scholars who have been influential in my formulation of the meaning of the constructivist stance. While they all may be part of a constructivist tradition, each construes or interprets constructivity in different and unique ways. In the negotiation of my own meaning of the constructivist stance, I am now able to make some distinctions within that mosaic. These are my personal constructions about constructivity. Being able to come to these distinctions required the mosaic within which I could construe my own meanings.

One of the distinctions that is powerful in my current meanings is the relationship of our constructions to a "real" or aboriginal world. Bruner's view of constructivism, based on Goodman, construes reality as actively created by the human mind. I have come to understand that this is a different ontological stance from that of Kelly and Piaget, both of whom took the view that while individuals create meaning, this is a representation of a "real" or aboriginal world. It seems to me that Bruner's stance allows us to contemplate these differing notions as two realities, two possible worlds. The difference between "construction" and "representation" becomes important if representation implies correspondence to an ultimate "reality" and "construction" implies the creation of "reality." The nature of multiple realities takes on a different significance when the idea of an ultimate reality is abandoned. Individual realities become possibilities rather than approximations or representations that imply a single, ultimate reality.

While my own constructions are now more like Bruner's, when I first read Bruner, prior to working in the classroom and beginning the writing of my dissertation, I was not able to make the same distinctions within the constructivist mosaic. I needed to negotiate with many possible meanings in order to construct my own distinctions, my own stance toward the meaning of constructivity. While it may be tempting to remove or dismiss those authors whose constructions are now inconsistent with my own, they are the contexts within which I construct my current text. Bruner points out that the "three modern titans of developmental theory—Freud, Piaget, and Vygotsky—may be constituting the realities of growth in our culture rather than merely describing them" (1986, p. 136). He discusses the diversity among their views of growth and the nature of the present criticisms of their theories. Bruner argues that these criticisms do not diminish or belittle their enormous contributions, but rather "speak to contemporary concerns that in some interesting way could not exist but for the sensibility that [their] original formulations helped bring into existence" (1986, p. 146). Their versions were "right versions" of a possible world for their time and place. Their constructions became the context within which others have been able to "go beyond them, and what remains behind is not them, but their effects 'in the guts of the living'" (Bruner, 1986, p. 145).

It seems to me that my own construction of meaning about constructivity has followed a similar path and the constructions I now hold were negotiated within the context of diverse but possible meanings of constructivity. The meanings I negotiated from Kelly's constructivism enabled me to begin my research. Reading Bruner, after being in the classroom, enabled me to negotiate new meanings about constructivism and about my classroom experience. I began to construe Bruner's negotiation of meaning as an essential component of constructivity. Negotiation of meaning seemed powerful to me because through that notion I could account for the importance of other people in our individual construction of meaning.

The definition of negotiation includes the ideas of bargaining or conferring with another or others with the aim of reaching some agreement. The word derives from Latin origins, "negotium" meaning "business" which combines "nec" meaning "not" with "otium" meaning "leisure." Construction of meaning implies a process that is somewhat different. To construct is to form by combining materials or parts; to form mentally. Although both "construct" and "construe" are derived from the same Latin root, "construere" meaning "to construct", from "com" meaning "together" plus "struere" meaning "to build up", "construe" is defined in terms of interpret, explain, deduce by inference. The idea of "building up together," while at one time part of what to construct and construe meant, seems to be lost in our current meanings. Thus the concept of negotiation seems powerful for discussing the development of meaning because it includes the two notions of "with others" and "the aim of reaching an agreement."

There are several versions within the constructivist tradition about the role of language in the negotiation of meaning. The view that the human mind creates realities using the symbol systems available in the culture means that language is seen as one of the symbol systems available, for "certain common constructional activities" (Bruner, 1986, p. 101). The role of symbol systems, including language, is to create realities within the context of realities already taken as "givens," rather than to represent some ultimate reality. Although central to Goodman's theory of symbols is reference, he states that all reference, whether literal or nonliteral, is dependent on context. "The meaning of the symbol is given by the system of meanings in which it exists" (Bruner, 1986, p. 101). What seems important to me is that while language is a major symbol system in our culture for constructing meaning, it is not the only system, nor does it operate independently of the complex of symbol systems in which it is embedded.

The act of meaning becomes a social act, where the social context acts as a generator of meanings. Halliday's explanation of a social semiotic as the context within which language acts as one of the symbol systems through which the meanings of the culture can be expressed seems to me to be useful and provides a theory of meaning that complements Vygotsky's developmental theory of mind.

My constructivist stance then is that we create individual realities, using the symbol systems available in our culture, through a process of interpersonal negotiation. While the nature of realities is individual and unique, we negotiate meanings within the context of the cultural meaning systems into which we are born. Multiple realities exist as possibilities, rather than as approximations or representations.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN—MY INITIAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE STUDY

Introduction

This chapter outlines my initial constructions about the meaning of the constructivist stance for research and sets forth the initial research design.

Thomas Popkewitz identifies research as a human endeavor (1981, p. 2). That is, research and research methods are human constructions. He suggests that distinctions such as qualitative versus quantitative are "surface" distinctions and that what is needed is to consider the philosophical, political and social underpinnings of different research methods in order to illuminate the different assumptions about the character of social inquiry.

He suggests that while "field study" approaches have become prominent in educational research, "differences and disagreements exist regarding the roles of the researcher and the social meanings of the research, the appropriate meanings and uses of data, and the extent and types of generalization that field studies can appropriately project" (1981, p. 2). A narrow base of agreement appears to be that the social context must be examined directly in order to understand and explain school and classroom interaction. Popkewitz identifies three "different scholarly traditions that underlie labels of method and that guide the construction of educational research": empirical-analytical, symbolic/interpretive and critical. Underlying the words and images associated with each method are assumptions about what constitutes social facts and how people make sense of their world. The power of these assumptions is that they become "givens," crystalized and reified as customs, conventions and findings. Popkewitz argues that focusing on the conflicts and disagreements among the scholarly traditions is critical to preventing a reification of ideas and also is necessary to "illuminate root issues and power relations that permeate the discourse about the conduct of schooling" (1981, p. 5). What Popkewitz is pointing out is that research and research methods are human constructions and need to be viewed as differing ways of construing the world, making explicit the assumptions often taken as "givens" and recognizing that there is no ultimate "right" research method.

> What we cannot argue for is the superiority of any single paradigm for explaining the complexities of schooling. Each intellectual tradition provides an important vantage point for considering social conduct. (1981, p. 21)

The Meaning of the Constructivist Stance for Research

A constructivist stance on learning is reflected in this study. This stance, that we are world makers as opposed to world receivers, has implications for the conduct of research. The constructivist stance acknowledges multiple realities; individuals construct unique meanings within the multiple contexts of the social and cultural experience. Interpersonal negotiation is the means through which individuals seek to share and clarify their realities. For research, the constructivist stance means that the researcher is a meaning maker; that multiple realities or meanings are acknowledged; that negotiation is the means through which interpersonal and intrapersonal understanding is furthered. The research process is a learning process; the researcher is a world maker.

Some current research methodologies reflect elements of the constructivist stance. Research termed descriptive, naturalistic or interpretive is able to account for the contexts in which meanings are constructed, and acknowledges that participants' understandings of experience can inform the research. But, as Popkewitz cautions, research approaches termed as "field study" have varying and sometimes conflicting assumptions about the nature of social inquiry. Collaborative research, action research and collaborative action research are terms currently popular in describing field study methods where teachers and researchers work together. There are differing constructions of the meanings of these terms, some more reflective of a constructivist stance than others.

A review of recent journal articles on collaborative research projects reveals that this term is currently popular in educational research and has differing meanings (McKay, 1986). Although all the articles refer to some kind of joint project between classroom teachers and university researchers, the view of the relationship between teacher and researcher and the nature of the collaborative process varies considerably. In many cases, the projects defined as collaborative research are characterized by a "top-down" model where university researchers determine all aspects of relationship, process and interpretation of the experience. Multiple realities are not acknowledged and meaning is not recognized as socially constructed through interpersonal negotiation.

Chris Clark (1986) defines collaborative research as a "systematic search for meaning in which teachers are involved in research themselves." He suggests three models of collaborative research. The friendship model builds on an already established relationship between teacher and researcher, where a common research question is pursued in a collegial manner and the relationship between the two parties continues after the project is complete. In a second model, which Clark calls the teacher-team and catalyst model, teachers are already working together and talking about what is happening in their classrooms. The university researcher enters as a third party and may act as a catalyst by providing some kinds of assistance and entering into dialogue. In Clark's cruise-ship model, teachers are involved aboard an ongoing university project. Clark calls all three of these models collaborative.

Carson and Jacknicke (1988) make a distinction between collaborative and cooperative projects, arguing that they differ in focus, in methodological orientation and in the form of knowledge obtained. They suggest that educational researchers and school districts have acted cooperatively when schools have been used as sites for collecting data, ranging from the completion of a questionnaire to extensive classroom observation. Collaborative research is distinguished from these endeavors as "a new kind of relationship which involves university based and school based educators 'labouring' together with a shared purpose" (1988, p. 3).

For Carson and Jacknicke, cooperative research projects focus on the researcher's question, which is formulated by and belongs to the researcher. In collaborative projects, they suggest that there is a focus on a common question creating an "outside researcher" and an "inside researcher." "The outside researcher and the inside researcher approach the question from different perspectives, especially at first but true collaboration means finding the commonality of the question" (1988, p. 4). The methodology in a cooperative project is designed and controlled by the outside researcher; in collaborative research, the methodology is negotiated by the participants during the process of research. With respect to the form of knowledge obtained, Carson and Jacknicke argue that in cooperative research the knowledge created is the property of the researcher; in collaborative research, the knowledge created is interpretive in relation to the common research focus. They maintain that the differences between cooperative and collaborative research are significant. "Collaborative projects ask that the functions of teaching and research become blurred. It asks that taken for granted assumptions about education be made problematic in order that all educators may participate in developing thoughtful practice" (1988, p. 4).

Carson and Jacknicke state that action research is an example of research they would term collaborative. Action research was introduced in the 1940s through the work of Kurt Lewin and was concerned with developing a closer relationship between theory and practice by the application of social science research tools and methods to practical social problems. Carson states that the notion of action research was quickly adopted in education, and that although it is neither firmly established nor universally accepted, action research through the years consists of variations on Lewin's themes: "improvement in people's situations, improvement in the knowledge of that situation and the active involvement of participants" (1988, p. 2).

Carson and Couture define action research as a distinct form of research, as being constituted by certain ethical considerations and knowledge bases:

> - initiated to solve practical problems of teaching and/or school life in general
> - requires collaborative action among teachers (with or without the expertise of outsiders)
> - involves educators who share a common set of ethical commitments (that is, to improve teaching and the quality of life in schools)
> - is essentially emancipatory and liberating (in that the process of action research typically leads to the unconscious and conscious unravelling of the limits to educational practice). (1988, p. vii)

Action research then, with its focus on planning for action, acting, observing and reflecting, is a form of collaborative research.

Another variation on the action research theme has been the "teacher as researcher" movement. The writings of Lawrence Stenhouse, a British curriculum scholar, have been influential over the past 20 years in promoting notions about the teacher as a researcher. Rudduck and Hopkins (1985) argue that the concept of emancipation was central to the work of Stenhouse. They suggest that Stenhouse was guided by the belief that it is the responsibility of teachers to emancipate students from the "insularity of their own minds" (1985, p. 3) and to foster a spirit of critical enquiry where knowledge is seen as tentative and open to interpretation. Emancipation for the teacher would involve similar processes, where the act of teaching itself and the content of the curriculum would be seen as tentative and open to interpretation and examination in a spirit of critical enquiry. Stenhouse believed that one way to accomplish this emancipation was for the teacher to take the perspective of a researcher. He saw the teacher-as-researcher role as a means to an end, not as an end in itself. It would permit the teacher to examine the act of teaching, thereby strengthening judgment and improving practice, and to focus on the curriculum as hypothetical.

Stenhouse viewed action research as a "type of research in which the research act is necessarily a substantive act; that is, the act of finding out has to be undertaken with an obligation to benefit others than the research community" (Stenhouse, 1985, p. 57). He stated that in education, "substantive acts are—to oversimplify a little--intended to help people learn" (1985, p. 57). This would imply that whatever is being done with the children and the teacher should be toward that end. In this view, the teaching act becomes the research act and defines the relationship between the outside and inside researchers. "Hence in action research the teacher has full and responsible control of the research act while the researcher's responsibility is to ensure that the maximum learning is gained from the teacher's acting as he does—through an act at once an educational act and a research act" (Stenhouse, 1985, p. 57).

Stenhouse suggests that action research thus has an immediate context for maximizing learning: the children's, the teacher's, the researcher's. It should also have a broader context of contributing to the learning of other teachers. What is implied is that the research must be accessible to teachers and testable by them. Descriptive case studies of classroom practice are examples of research that is accessible to teachers and that may be "tested" by teachers in light of their own practice.

Stenhouse argues that the descriptive case study, by virtue of its "thick description," provides documentary reference for the discussion of practice. Operating from a constructivist perspective, Stenhouse points out that when educators discussion educational practice, they do so with reference to their own unique construction of that practice. Case studies make personal experience publicly available and provide a common reference point for discussion and interpretation. They also provide an avenue for comparison and contrast of other cases with one's own, which Stenhouse believes is "the case which above all one must come to understand if one's practice is to be effective" (Stenhouse, 1985, p. 54). Viewing one's own case in the light of other possible cases could be viewed as a form of interpersonal negotiation.

Stenhouse believes that critique is crucial to the improvement of practice and defines critique as "a systematic body of critical standards by which to interpret and evaluate practice" (Stenhouse, 1985, p. 54). Case studies provide practitioners with a body of experience upon which to interpret and evaluate practice, again extending their own experience of schools and classrooms.

Stenhouse bases his view of teaching and research on a constructivist perspective of meaning making. He believes that constructing a personal perception of our world within the social and cultural traditions available to us is "a task that faces not only the teacher, but also the student, and teaching rests on both partners in the process being at different stages of the same enterprise" (1985, p. 106). He states that good learning is about constructing a view of the world. For Stenhouse, curriculum is a hypothetical specification, which in its use is to be questioned and tested; knowledge is viewed as being constructed through negotiation, and both curriculum and knowledge are seen to be open to adjustment in the light of reflection on experience. This type of enquiry Stenhouse likens to art and makes the case for teaching as "the art which expresses in a form accessible to learners an understanding of the nature of that which is to be learned" (Stenhouse, 1985, p. 105). For Stenhouse, if the teacher is an artist, then the teacher is a researcher because art is based on enquiry and experiment, with the purpose of improving the truth of performance.

> Such a view of educational research declares that the theory or insights created in collaboration by professional researchers and professional teachers is always provisional, always to be taught in a spirit of enquiry, and always to be tested and modified by professional practice. The teacher who founds his practice of teaching upon research must adopt a research stance to his own practice; it must be provisional and exploratory. (Stenhouse, 1985, p. 126)

Research Design: Constructing the Study, the Researcher as World Maker

A research design reflecting a constructivist stance was central to this study. Because the constructivist stance acknowledges that the meanings of social concepts are arrived at through interpersonal negotiation, the study questions could only be reflected on through a sharing of human cognition. At the outset of this study, a naturalistic and contextual research design was seen to be consistent with the nature of the research questions. Characteristics of such designs include:

- the natural setting as the direct source of data
- the researcher as the key research instrument
- the collection of descriptive data
- concern with process
- the inductive analysis of data
- the essential concern of meaning.

(Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, pp. 27-30)

These characteristics would seem to provide a general design consistent with a constructivist perspective. However, because the research questions focused on the children's classroom experiences and construction of meaning, the research design needed to account for the realities and the involvement of the children and the teacher. The construct of collaborative research as construed by Carson and Jacknicke, and Stenhouse, appeared to provide a framework within which the teacher and children could figure as key participants. In this study, the children, the teacher and the researcher are all viewed as learners.

The researcher, as a learner, is seeking in a conscious and systematic way to make sense of her experience, and, as all learners, must do this in light of the realities of others. The research design of this study recognized that the teacher, the researcher and the children construct multiple realities within the classroom setting, that there is no single "reality" of the classroom, and that illuminating the multiple realities of the classroom is essential to negotiating the meaning of teaching and learning.

Recognizing the multiple realities of the classroom experience for individual participants was important to me as a researcher, as was valuing those realities for what they meant to the individuals and to an understanding of teaching and learning. I was uncomfortable with research that took place in classrooms but either failed to acknowledge or belittled the realities of the teacher and children. I sought a research design that would allow me to acknowledge that teacher, researcher and children construct multiple realities in the classroom setting; different realities, but all having value. It seemed that a collaborative research design would provide a framework within which to negotiate relationships with the teacher and children.

I constructed the initial research design as part of my dissertation proposal. Outlined in this chapter is the proposed design that provided the framework within which the actual research came into being. Subsequent chapters will present how the realities of the collaborative design unfolded and how the various participants, teacher, children and researcher experienced it.

Research Design as Outlined in Dissertation Proposal

The research will be done in the context of an elementary classroom. Selection of a classroom will be based on the following criteria:

1. The teacher teaches both social studies and language arts to her/his own class and does so (in my opinion and others) in the spirit of current, sound practices in both areas.
2. The children have opportunities to talk, write, draw and make things in social studies.
3. The teacher would like to and is willing to work with me in a collaborative manner.

The study will take place during a "unit" of social studies which may be from eight to 12 weeks. My role as a researcher will be participant observer. I will be present in the classroom prior to and after the unit is completed, but in a less formal and intensive way. Time spent in the classroom will be from January to June. The unit will be chosen collaboratively by the teacher and myself.

During the course of the unit, I will be present for all formal social studies lessons, as well as related times. The teacher will not be asked to change or disturb the "natural" flow of events in any way. I am hoping that during times when I am not there, the teacher will be attuned and sensitive to events that may be pertinent to the study and will take note of these.

I would like to profile the learning of three to six children, looking at what meanings they construct through this unit of social studies and the role of talk, writing, drawing and building in their constructions. The children to be profiled will be chosen in collaboration with the teacher after I have had an opportunity to establish a rapport in the classroom.

Hull suggests that as teachers we "have direct access, through the child's talk and writing, to some awareness of the living actuality, the significant contours and pressures of individual minds" (1985, p. 227). Methods to be used in formulating my own constructions through the research will include:

1. audiotaping of spontaneous child talk
2. audiotaping of interviews with children and teacher
3. observation, mine and the teacher's
4. journal writing, mine, teacher's, children's
5. children's writing, drawing, projects
6. interviews with parents of the children profiled.

The collaborative nature of the relationship between myself, as researcher, and the teacher will evolve throughout the study. I am hoping that in addition to the role of the teacher explained above, that he/she will read my field notes and that this will act as a basis for opening up the dialogue about what is occurring in the classroom.

During a study of this nature, data analysis begins in the field and is often an ongoing part of the data collection in the form of comments, ideas, themes, metaphors, analogies and concepts that develop. Because of the collaborative focus of this study, the teacher will be an integral part of analysis of the data in the field.

The initial research design in the dissertation proposal was as outlined above. I saw this general design as consistent with a constructivist stance and appropriate for the questions I was asking in the study. I anticipated that the specific design would evolve as a particular teacher, children and classroom made themselves known to me. This evolution is outlined in the following chapter.

A Note on Collaborative Research

As was previously described, the construct of collaborative research itself has multiple meanings, ranging from the association of a teacher with a university researcher to a partnership where teacher and researcher share in all research-related decisions. Because of these multiple constructions about collaborative research, one of my goals for the study became to make as explicit as possible the relationship between the teacher and myself in order to add to the meanings about collaborative research. This particular focus grew out of a discussion at my candidacy, which raised the question of how a collaborative relationship differs from the relationship between informant and researcher in ethnographic methodology.

Elliot Eisner points out that ethnographic methodology grows out of anthropology, in the social science tradition, and that a collaborative methodology has its roots in the humanities and arts where the focus is on the "primacy of experience" in contrast to the representation of experience through propositional language in the sciences. What he is saying is that the social science tradition assumes that meaning is to be found in the world, in contrast to the phenomenological tradition, which assumes meaning to be construed by the individual. From the constructivist stance, these are two different realities, two different ways of construing experience. What Eisner calls for in the educational research community is an acceptance that there are differing constructions, differing world versions, differing ways of conceptualizing the world and differing ways of conveying what the world is about. Eisner suggests that a focus on the "primacy of experience" is an alternative way of construing the world and that the application of such a focus means that:

> American educational researchers are beginning to go back to the schools, not to conduct commando raids, but to work with teachers as colleagues in a common quest and through such collaboration to rediscover the qualities, the complexities, and the richness of life in classrooms. We are beginning to talk with teachers, not only to teachers. We are beginning to ask ourselves how we can see and describe the minor miracles of stunning teaching instead of prescribing how teachers should go about their work. (1988, p. 19)

CHAPTER IV

THE CLASSROOM CONTEXTS—NEGOTIATING THE MEANING OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN

Introduction

The previous chapters have outlined some of the contexts I as "the researcher" brought to the classroom. These would be some of the contexts within which I would construct realities and negotiate meanings. The classroom setting is also a transaction of multiple contexts. Each child brings contexts with him or her, as does the teacher. There are curriculum contexts and school contexts. The classroom context is a transaction among the multiple contexts that meet there. Realities are constructed and meanings negotiated within meanings already available. This chapter will outline some of the school context, the teacher's context and the classroom context. In the remainder of the chapter, I will discuss some of the evolving text that I, the teacher and the children constructed as we came together to negotiate the meanings of our relationships.

The School Context

Midcity School and the Alternative Program

Midcity School was built in 1923 and is characteristic of schools of that era in Alberta. The three-storey brick structure has high ceilings, big windows and wide hallways. The school is situated in a major urban setting and houses a "regular" school program as well as the Alternative Program supported by the Urban Public School District. Midcity is an elementary school that also has a kindergarten program, a day care, an after-school care program and a nursery school, as well as classes for children in grades one to six. The Alternative Program has classes for children in grades one to six and occupies the third floor of the school. There are three classrooms there, each containing two grades. Children in the program come to the school from various parts of the city. The teacher has taught in this program for six years and her own two children attended school in the Alternative Program. This program and the "regular" school program exist in harmony in the school, and share the same principal, staffroom, professional development activities, playgrounds, recess and lunch times, and often work together on activities involving the entire school population.

The following excerpts from the Alternative Program Information Booklet provide some background on the philosophy of the program.

> The Alternative Program is a unique educational alternative within the Urban Public School System. It differs from most elementary school programs in that its basic philosophy emphasizes a parent's right to be actively involved in their child's education. (p. 1)
>
> The Principles of the Alternative Program (pp. 2-3)
>
> 1. Parents who apply to the program are prepared to commit time to the program. A major component of the Alternative Program philosophy is the belief that parents have a right to actively participate in their child's education, and this has led to an expectation that parents make a special commitment to the program. This degree of involvement is basic to the program philosophy, which considers the children, teachers and parents all to be integral parts of the total school community.
>
> 2. Parents can expect ongoing collaboration with teachers regarding their child's total development. The Alternative Program maintains a philosophy of the development of the child in all aspects of his/her growth, including social, physical, intellectual, cultural, and emotional. The individual child is viewed as part of a larger world including his family, his community and his culture.
>
> 3. Parents can expect that their child will have a variety of opportunities in the Alternative Program. The Alternative Program's educational philosophy, which has been developed

> over 13 years of practice, encourages the traditional three R's plus its own three R's:
>
> Risking to learn, teach, try and excel;
> Responsibility for one's own learning;
> Relating to people and the environment.
>
> 4. Parents influence the program as a member of the Alternative Community by discussing the program philosophy and methods with one another and with teachers. (pp. 2-3)
>
> The Learning Environment (page 4)
>
> The learning environment is holistic in nature. The curriculum skills and concepts are integrated into meaningful themes. The students work in a variety of groupings on projects that demand active participation, accountability and sharing. There is an emphasis on being responsive and developing independence. This is accomplished by giving the children choices within a framework established by the teacher.
>
> The holistic approach is based on the reading and writing process. Literature and content books are chosen by the students, who are encouraged to share their reading through diaries, group discussions, displays, and oral and written presentations. Language is used as a tool to learn the content subjects, such as science or mathematics with language integrated into theme projects and activities. (p. 4)

The Parental Context—A Like-Minded Community

I had the opportunity to discuss with some of the parents their reasons for choosing the Alternative Program for their children. Their responses provide a glimpse into the parental context in terms of general beliefs and attitudes about education and about what these parents want for their children. Seven parents, including the teacher, were interviewed and I organized their comments into the themes below. Some of their actual comments are recorded below each of the themes.

The question I asked the parents was, "What attracted you to the Alternative Program?" This had not been a "planned" question, as my reason for talking with the parents had been to find out what background experiences the children might be bringing to the social studies unit. In the course of conversation with the second parent interviewed, I asked about the parent's reasons for choosing the program.

The parent's response indicated some strong and well-defined reasons including that she wanted the child in a caring environment where the child would be valued as an individual. The parent wanted a particular type of involvement as a parent and was disillusioned with the child's previous school experience. I began to wonder what reasons other parents had for choosing the program and decided that I would continue to ask this question to each of the parents.

Parental Reasons for Choosing the Alternative Program

1. Access, sense of involvement, ownership, control

    - access to the classroom, accessibility to the parents
    - give my input in terms of my skills
    - participate in what is going on in the classroom. There are different kinds of involvement. And that was their idea of involvement, that they gave you a task to do and you did it. It was a robot kind of involvement.
    - to be able to watch her without being obvious about it
    - we were involved as parents, as teachers
    - parent oriented and I could devote time. I wanted to get involved.

2. Sense of community

    - plus I really liked . . . the community aspect of it . . . community days . . . I've made some friends . . . you do feel a sense of community which you don't find in very many schools.
    - the parents over the years have all had the goal of trying to be more involved in their child's education.
    - we all strive for one goal, a better education, background for our kids, we have that in common.
    - as well as a community feeling. There were children from kindergarten to grade six within a very small building. They were all working together . . . we had to give time and be in car pools . . . we helped make the building livable.

3. Disillusion with child's previous school experience

- so structured . . . he [principal] wasn't flexible
- he was bored with the program . . . ridiculed for being slow at doing his work
- school was very old-fashioned, very strict, very militaristic, very cool
- we were really disillusioned by the regular public school system . . . first year of school was wonderful . . . hard-working teacher . . . who spent a lot of extra time with the kids . . . took that as a norm, but it wasn't a norm, it was something special.

4. Word of mouth, some personal contact with someone in the program

- my brother has his kids here
- Director of the daycare had her two kids here and there was this woman teaching there who had kids in here and one of the parents who had been in the daycare, her kids had gone
- I met some of the children that were going . . . and I really liked them.
- my sister-in-law

5. Particular beliefs about education, learning

- with a lot of it being more of a humanistic approach . . . very interested in humanistic, cooperative-type learning
- looking for a place that could teach more than just the academics, that could teach social skills and interpersonal skills and self-esteem
- the whole idea of everybody sitting at a desk and everybody turning to page four or what not, just doesn't leave any room for individualism or creativity
- I wanted school to be fun for her
- individual time, [the teacher] knows what's happening with [the student]
- everything is so intertwined that they don't sometimes realize they're learning different courses all wrapped up into one
- just because they were still into [saying] sit in desks, don't move, don't talk, fill in workbooks, all this sort of thing. And I did not see education that way. I do not want that for my child . . . [this program recognized that children] needed to move, needed to talk, do projects . . . [they] were already dealing with concrete objects for learning math . . . they were writing their own experiential books and charts for learning to read; they were not using readers.

6. Parental values/view of child/goals for child

- I wanted to make sure that the people cared
- you don't have to be the same as everybody else . . . you're a person and you have value as a person
- I was looking for a place that could teach more than just the academics, that could teach social skills and interpersonal skills and self-esteem

- none of us ever wanted our kids not to do well . . . we're all in university so you can't say we wanted to shoot down academics
- we wanted our kids to be independent . . . to be able to stand on their own two feet and speak for themselves in a way that's appropriate and effective
- to nurture their academic creativity I think is really important
- I wanted school to be fun for her so she can go on to university

7. Own school experience

- I know when I think back to my school experience, I had some good teachers but the ones that I remember were the ones that allowed themselves to be human, you know, could feel with them even though they yelled at you or didn't pay any attention to you in particular, just the fact that they were allowing themselves to be themselves
- I myself didn't enjoy a lot of school because of the way it was done . . . I was a visual learner and had a hard time with a lot of auditory and also I'm very antsy . . . everybody would stand and read off the same page at the same time, and that sort of stuff
- my wife had very much the same experience . . . she just hated it, cause it was the same thing . . . everybody on the same page
- I hated school . . . I didn't hate school, I just . . . I hated the structure of the classroom, the teacher always walking up and down . . . .

The Teacher's Context

Ann, the teacher, was experienced and had worked in the Alternative Program for six years. Previously she had taught special education at the junior high school level. She had a Bachelor of Education degree. Ann had well-defined views on children, social studies and the operation of her classroom. Over the course of our noon-hour conversations and through written explanations from Ann, she very articulately shared her beliefs.

On Children

Ann viewed children as capable learners. She felt that "adults in general have the attitude that some one who is three feet tall and eight years old hasn't got any brains" (March 17, taped conversation). She explained how her own views of young children's abilities had been altered by working with another teacher who had "done incredible things" with five year olds in the area of art.

> She had them thinking, speaking and doing the most incredible things and it wasn't that they were brilliant kids. It wasn't that they were geniuses that had simply been discovered. They were average kids, they are my grade fours right now. And they understood. And I thought, "This is what we are dealing with. Children understand it . . . it's just finding a way to help them understand". (March 17 tape)

Ann viewed children as "human beings with all this potential, all this intelligence that can rationalize and analyze and can do conclusive thinking and deductive thinking." She felt that as teachers we needed to "realize that all we have to do is put little seeds in, or say 'What would you do if . . . ?'" Ann objected to a view of children as "inferior beings, that know nothing," which she said often resulted in teaching as "putting [knowledge] into them."

On Social Studies and Social Education

Ann had a keen interest in the area of social studies, believing that it was particularly critical to young children's education. She said she had a "theory"; "I don't think people learn unless they feel secure and knowledgeable about who they are" and "I think that comfort arises out of social studies. That's my theory" (March 3 tape). She felt that children needed to know how they fit into their culture, city, family and community and that this "connection with humanity" through understanding "who they are and how they fit into their community" was prerequisite to learning things like math and science. Ann explained her rationale:

> Once people are secure, then you can go on and do science experiments and that sort of thing. But look at some of these geniuses who get penned down into a small microscopic scientific or mathematical area. They make all these wondrous observations, but how the observations are used will depend upon how they see it fitting into humanity. If they have no connection with humanity, it doesn't fit. So I really believe the curriculum for social studies is about people

> being secure about themselves in the community through knowledge and understanding. (April 13 tape)

In addition to viewing social studies as knowledge and understanding about where one fits into humanity, Ann also believed that social skills were learned through social studies. Although Ann saw social studies as a vehicle for looking at social problem solving and decision making, she felt that the children would not necessarily transfer these skills into "real life" situations unless the skills were practically applied by the children and they were given practical examples by adults.

> I thoroughly believe that social studies is a learning of social skills and human history is a recording of human behavior. Some things that happened in history worked out well, and other things didn't. So looking back on it gives us an opportunity to stand back and look objectively and define why it didn't work or why it did work. But when they [children] are right in the middle of it, the only way they can feel it, is to allow them as close to reality experiences as it may be. So the decision making and methods of making objective decisions, the way of making judgments have to be practically applied and it can't always be done during role playing. The role playing helps them to think about the historical aspects but it doesn't always work for transfer to real life situations. You can role play appropriate behavior on the playground until you are blue in the face and it still doesn't come through down on the playground. You have to be there, right on top of it, teaching them step by step, or not teaching them so much as offering suggestions and practical examples of how to solve a problem when they have it. Right there. (March 10 tape)

I have included all of Ann's thoughts on social studies and learning social skills because these ideas pervaded the general operation of her classroom. Regardless of curricular subjects, Ann modelled problem-solving and decision-making skills for the children and provided opportunities for them to make use of these, independently of her, in real life situations in the classroom and school. Ann outlines specifically what this construction of "social education" means for the operation of her classroom in the following written description of the context of her classroom.

On Classroom Operation

I asked Ann to write about how her classroom works and this is how she responded.

> Each year on the first school day after the children have chosen their own sitting space, I acknowledge their choice by stating that they have just declared the September seating plan. Any changes from this initial plan have to be negotiated with me. Then we proceed to have a discussion (about 45 - 60 minutes) about student roles and teacher roles at school. I ask such questions as:
>
> 1. Why are children expected to go to school?
> 2. What do they personally expect to accomplish in this school year?
> 3. How do they think they will achieve this?
> 4. What do they expect from me, their teacher?
> 5. What kinds of things do teachers have to do and say in order to help students?
>
> As the children talk, I write their responses on chart paper (this implies a sense of permanency that a blackboard does not).
>
> Then comes the big task of defining the philosophy so that the children feel they own it. Prior to their entry, I have prepared a chart that is titled:
>
> The 3 Rs of the Alternative Program
>
> 1. Relate:
> 2. Risk:
> 3. Responsibility:
>
> We review the meaning of each of these words before I ask:
>
> 1. To what or whom do teachers and students need to relate?
> 2. What do we have to risk in school?
> 3. What are your responsibilities?
>
> Again, as they respond I write, followed by a reading and sharing of the total chart.
>
> Then I bring out another chart titled: Classroom Expectations. At this point I share some of the [school district] expectations that teachers need to impose for the sake of safety (e.g., a teacher needs to know where all her/his children are at all times in case of an emergency such as fire). I ask the children how we could accomplish this. Every year, my children are brilliant. They always solve this very efficiently—"put your name on the blackboard and where you are

going." As well I have a pet peeve—gum chewing. I tell them why it bothers me and therefore they understand why it will not be a part of our classroom. And so the discussion goes until we have collaboratively constructed three to five positive statements about behavior expectations for the whole year that all of us can live with. If at any time management seems to be failing, we review the expectations, either to reinforce them or to modify if necessary. Some examples of these expectations are:

- all children must communicate where they are at all times.
- gum and candy will remain outside the building.
- walk at all times.
- all people will behave at all times in a manner that encourages and promotes a positive learning environment (soft inside voices, kind comments, oral expression of feelings, etc.).

By this time we have created a framework in which to make other decisions. For example, clarification of the custodian's role and therefore what else we have to do in order to maintain a tidy work space. We collaboratively define jobs and how many people should be assigned to each job. We discuss access to materials, defining behavior that will enhance not impede learning.

For the entire month of September, I focus the theme on community relations and socialization skills, allowing the children time to tell us who they are as individuals and time to inter-relate as a group to accomplish group tasks. Right from the beginning they make decisions about classroom expectations, access to materials, people and places, acceptable behavior, etc., by a system of "majority rules." Often in the beginning this is done with closed eyes or secret ballot so that an individual's decision is not influenced by peer pressure. This takes time but it is well worth it. The children gain a meaningful sense of their needs versus group needs vis a vis majority decisions—all contributing to a sense of democracy and responsible citizenship. They learn to cope with majority decisions that do not represent their personal choice but which they cannot sabotage if they wish others to cooperate with their majority choice at another time.

As a teacher it is my responsibility to facilitate responsible citizens and to recognize when the children are ready to make a responsible decision. The teacher must understand the importance of "letting go of power" in order to create strong independent thinkers who can rationalize, opinionate and clearly think through a problem. We cannot expect eight and nine years olds to be able to define their own curriculum as they are not consciously aware of their psychological and learning development. But within the adult defined curriculum, these same children can be given choices. These choices can vary from classroom management as previously described, to which activity they will do within a learning centre, when they will do it within the teacher-defined time limit (e.g., one week), with whom they will work, and where they will work. If at any time the teacher sees a variety of ways of accomplishing a concept, then it is up to her to define several choices or options, perhaps even asking the children for further ideas, and then giving the children the opportunity to choose by majority rule. This empowers the children to make a decision and to relate meaningfully to the curriculum.

Whenever problems occur between students, my task is to create a safe environment for them to solve it. I usually define a private space, a time, a behavior expectation of calm discussion and an outcome of a reasonable solution to which both parties can agree and then relate calmly to me, the referee. I interfere with this procedure only when there seems to be a personality imbalance of power. I try to equalize the balance by being present as a spectator interjecting either to calm the aggressive one or encourage the shy one to speak.

As well in September I spend a lot of time clearly stating teacher expectations for each subject. Each time the children are encouraged to respond and clarify their role within that expectation. For example, the math procedure is that I will work with each grade on alternating days. During that time we will correct previous assignments, learn new concepts, and discuss their new assignments. On the days when I am working with the other grade, the children will quietly work independently or in small groups teaching each other. Before each math class I review this expectation until they can say it without any help. If at any time the management breaks down, I stop the class and review the expectation particularly with the offending person(s). If this does not solve the problem I then give the person(s) a choice to behave accordingly in the class or to work in isolation in the hall with the expectation of seeing me during their free time (e.g., recess). Thus, as a teacher I define the limits, while the children make the choices. They learn to make responsible decisions, they learn a procedure for responsible citizenship.

As a teacher I facilitate learning within a safe environment where each citizen child can calmly share their ideas without fear of insult or retribution. It is an adult responsibility to know what children can handle and to give them a challenge each time so growth occurs. A two year old can decide what kind of soup to have in a restaurant or what color of socks to wear. A nine year old can choose between several options about how to study a concept or how to spend an hour of earned free time. A 15 year old can decide how to spend a clothing allowance that will suit their needs. Teachers sin greatly if they maintain all the power all the time, as it creates a handicapped nation of people. Our first responsibility should be one of developing clear-thinking responsible citizens through moment-to-moment, day-to-day, meaningful experiences as a way of life.

The Classroom Context

Ann's classroom is on the third floor of Midcity School. There are 18 children in the classroom, 13 girls and five boys, seven grade three's and 11 grade fours. The children call Ann and myself by our first names. This is part of the Alternative Program philosophy. The classroom has high north-facing windows and a high ceiling. Most of the walls are painted a bright sunshine yellow. The children's desks and chairs are pushed together and arranged in a horseshoe in front of one of the blackboards. The seating arrangement is changed every month by Ann; the first and last month of school the children choose the seating plan. Ann explains that this is done to "develop different kinds of relationships among the children" to "help them learn to be social beings." Within the 10 months of the school year, the children will sit in a table grouping with everyone in the class. Ann also explains that even though the children may have to sit with someone they don't like, because it is only for a month, they don't ask her to be moved.

On the third floor, in addition to Ann's grade three/four classroom, there is a one/two class and a five/six class, also part of the Alternative Program. The children in the program stay with the same teacher for two years. This organization facilitates a "cycling" of curriculum topics and this works particularly well in the area of social studies. Each year, Ann chooses three topics from the available six. The next year, the remaining topics are dealt with. An integral component of the Alternative Program, as previously stated, is the use of themes. Ann uses the social studies curriculum topics as the vehicle around which she organizes much of her "theme" approach to teaching. She defines theme time generally as "integration of social studies, science, health, art, math and language. This particular theme

[Alberta Pioneers—done during the research] leans heavily towards social studies, art and language skills" (written communication from Ann, July, 1987).

Ann's classroom has a large, open, carpeted space where the class often sits for group instructions and listening to Ann read aloud. This space is also available for individuals or small groups of children to work. From the classroom the children also have access to a wide, open hallway, an empty classroom and the library.

The classroom is readied for the upcoming study of Alberta's Pioneers—two bulletin boards sport pioneer pictures and posters and a third bulletin board displays nine laminated color pictures of quilt patterns. These run along the top of the space; along the bottom, within the reach of eight and nine year olds, are three pockets containing laminated information cards with accompanying questions. These three "gathering information" sheets, along with the "opener" activity make up the theme activities for the week of January 5 to 9.

Ann had prepared for each child a "planning and record" sheet (see Appendix I). This sheet outlines the week's work; one is given to each child at the beginning of each week. Ann explains that she plans by the week and that "theme" time is generally Monday, Tuesday and Friday afternoons.

The Collaborative Context

The Beginning of the Collaborative Relationship

I first met Ann in my role as a social studies consultant with Urban Public Schools. Ann visited our resource centre and attended social studies inservices. She expressed keen interest in using social studies themes and recognized language as a key factor in children's learning.

Our relationship began with a common professional interest in children and the curriculum areas of social studies and language arts. I had been in Ann's classroom a few times, in my role as a consultant, and had also been invited to the school to lead inservice sessions on integrating language arts and social studies through literature and theme planning. Ann and I were professional acquaintances through implicit mutual interest.

From Implicit to Explicit Mutual Interest

I had been a consultant for six years before deciding to pursue doctoral studies that would focus on children's learning. A research design consistent with my view of learning as an individual construction within a social setting, a collaborative setting, was essential. The major question for me, was who could I collaborate with—who would collaborate with me? The criteria I had generated for my research proposal (see previous chapter) provided a framework but not an actual contact. Although I did not know Ann well, her name came to mind as I thought about teachers and classrooms that operated within my proposal framework. I called the Urban Schools social studies consultant and explained the kind of person/situation I had in mind. He provided me with two names, one of which was Ann's. His perceptions of Ann were similar to and confirmed mine. I contacted Ann to ask if I could spend a few hours in her classroom, observing and talking to the children to gather information for a paper I was doing. The following entry from my journal details how this contact in Ann's classroom changed our implicit mutual interest to explicit mutual interest.

> December 17, 1987 - Journal Entry
>
> I had originally in mind to spend some time in two or three rooms to determine where "things" might work out the best. I was doing a

> paper for another class and wanted to get some feeling for how kids experience a subject area and thought I could "check out" people and places during this informal time spent in classrooms. However, I decided to throw all my eggs in one basket, spend a little time in Ann's classroom, if she was willing, and then decide if I should approach her with the idea of pursuing my research in her classroom. The time spent there (an hour or so for three or four days) convinced me it was the perfect classroom in which to do such work—the children had lots of opportunity to talk, write, etc., there were only around 20 students—but the final "sign" that I should approach Ann came from her . . . the last day I was there, gathering info, observing re: my paper, as I left, she said she would really like to read the paper when finished because she was interested in the same kind of questions re: kids, learning.

Ann's statement about being interested in the same questions was the beginning of our explicit collaborative relationship. I was elated but apprehensive that when I approached her about doing research together there would be factors that might necessitate her refusal. Not long after she had made the remark about mutual interests, we went out for lunch and I told Ann I wanted to explore the possibilities with her of doing some research in her classroom, looking together at the meanings children construct through a unit of social studies. I talked about the collaborative research relationship. The Urban Schools had a formal teacher-researcher project that Ann could be part of if she wished. In addition to our relationship, this would provide some formal recognition for Ann, the possibility of graduate university credit, and an opportunity to meet regularly with other teacher-researchers. I suggested that Ann take some time to think this all over but before lunch finished she said, "Let's do it!" The decision to enter a collaborative relationship was now explicit.

Formalizing the Collaborative Relationship

Ann was beginning the next social studies theme immediately after Christmas vacation. As our agreement to work together had taken place just days before Christmas, Ann had already chosen the topic and planned the theme activities and projects. This was fine with me and so I called the principal of Midcity School and explained the project Ann and I wished to undertake with her approval. The principal said that if Ann wished to work with me that this was certainly fine with her. I raised the subject of getting parental permission as soon as possible and the principal suggested that this could be done by letter during the first week of school in January. Formalizing the collaborative relationship consisted of: informing the principal and seeking approval at the school level, requesting formal approval through the university and the school system Cooperative Activities Program, and seeking written parental permission.

Ann Introduces the Collaborative Relationship to the Children

January 5th was the first day of school after Christmas and the first day of the explicit, formal collaborative relationship between Ann and me. I arrived at the school over the lunch hour, as Ann and I had agreed. Ann told me that she had prepared the children that morning for the research. Later in the day I had an opportunity to ask her if she could recall what she had said to the children.

When I had visited the classroom before Christmas, Ann had introduced me as her friend and had said that I was interested in how children learn. This morning, she had explained that I was a Ph.D. candidate and that this was "the highest level of education you could reach" and that my research was on something that I was really interested in. Ann explained my interest to the children as being in what children "really learn," no matter what the teacher thinks she is teaching. She also explained her role by saying she would be making observations and asking herself questions about their learning along the way.

Negotiating the Meaning of Collaborative Relationship: The First Week

Ann and I

When I had initially approached Ann with the idea of a collaborative research project, I was very concerned about what she, as the classroom teacher would "get out" of this project. How would it be collaborative for her? I saw the Urban Schools teacher-researcher project as one way that Ann could be rewarded and recognized for her part in the research. Ann had obviously been thinking about the teacher-research project during the Christmas break because this was one of the topics she broached during our noon-hour visit on my first day in the school in January. She said she was "having doubts" about participating in the teacher-researcher project. She was concerned about the amount of extra time being involved in the teacher-researcher project would mean. She said she had been relaxed before Christmas and had not taken on extra things and as a result felt that she knew the children better and could concentrate her full energies on them. At this point, we decided that Ann would talk to another teacher in the school who had been involved in the teacher-researcher project and that I also would attempt to find out more information about it. Later in the day, I told Ann that she should not feel obliged to join the teacher-researcher project and that I had suggested it only because I wanted her "to get something out of" the study. She told me she did not feel obliged to be in the project. She had explicitly established her independence within our collaborative relationship.

The third day I was in Ann's classroom, we again discussed the possibility of her participation in the Urban Schools formal teacher-researcher project. I had some further information for Ann, including that participation in the project would involve a monthly meeting and perhaps the writing of a paper in order to be granted some university credit. Ann explained that she was considering participation in the project in light of her own priorities for the next few months. There were some other personal activities she wanted to have time for and she said she couldn't concentrate on being the kind of teacher she was and be thinking about being a researcher at the same time. She described herself as being the kind of person who gave her full concentration to one thing at a time.

I mentioned again that I had introduced the idea of the teacher-researcher project because I wanted Ann "to get something" from the project. I kept asking myself the question about how our relationship was collaborative. I was getting so much from being in Ann's classroom; I would "get" a degree as my reward. What would Ann get? Ann's response to my concerns helped me to see that I had been viewing our collaborative relationship in purely extrinsic ways. She said that she got her "reward" from seeing what the children could do—how they grew as people, as learners—and that she knew that "a large part of what the kids can do is because of the way I teach." Ann explained that knowing she could provide the context for my looking at those children to understand how they learned was enough for her. So it was settled—no more talk of the teacher-researcher project. It had been my idea, my intention. Ann said again that she did not feel obliged to be in the project because I had suggested it. I was glad and felt that this decision was a significant moment in our relationship. To me it signified an equality and openness based on mutual interest and which now involved personal independence and professional integrity. My construction of the collaborative relationship was being renegotiated as Ann and I shared our meanings.

Another aspect of the collaborative relationship was my role in the classroom. Ann had planned the nine-week unit prior to agreeing to work with me. In my research proposal, I had stated that the teacher and I would choose the unit collaboratively, so this was another change from the original plan. This was not a problem for me and during our meeting on January 5 Ann asked if there were any particular activities I wanted done in the unit. I mentioned journal writing. She said that she did do this with the children in some units and that we could incorporate "theme journals" into this one. I let Ann know I was willing to work with the children, to drive and supervise on field trips and that I would bring in pictures from my picture file. I explained to Ann that I would be making copious descriptive notes about the classroom and the children. Before I had an opportunity to ask her, Ann asked me if I would be willing to share my notes with her. I said I would be delighted to and that I had hoped that she would be prepared to read them. We also discussed the possibility of Ann writing up her impressions on a weekly basis and set up a formal weekly meeting for Mondays at noon. During the first week, I drafted a parental permission letter which Ann and I then revised to be from both of us (see Appendix II).

The Children and I

On my first day in the classroom, Ann told the children that I would be with them for the next three months during the social studies theme. Since Ann and I had not yet discussed how we would identify the "profile" children, I decided to use the time to get to know the children better and allow them to get to know me. During the first week, I circulated among groups, occasionally asked questions, responded to children's requests for assistance (e.g., how to spell a word), assisted Ann by charting children's responses, and read and wrote written responses in the children's theme journals. Ann said the children were used to having people in the room; as the week progressed they did start bringing their work for me to look at. The children didn't come to me for assistance in answering questions they were working on, except on Friday when Brenda came to me and explained that she was asking me because the line at Ann's desk was too long! On Friday, as the children were leaving, Monica asked me if I liked being in their classroom and also asked Ann if I was going with them on the Monday field trip. The children seemed to regard me as a resource person, but not an authority figure.

Negotiating the Meaning: Research as Evolving Relationship

The Noon-Hour Conversations as a Context, a Weaving Together

The context for much of our meaning making became our weekly noon-hour conversations. Monday of the second week, as Ann and I discussed the theme journals at noon, she asked if I had any observations on the first week. I told her I would give her my field notes on Week One, she could read them and we could perhaps discuss them the next day. This became the pattern for the remainder of the time I spent with Ann. Monday I would bring her my photocopied field notes from the previous week. Tuesday noon-hours we used these notes as a departure point for thinking about and talking about what was happening in the classroom. Ann made some written comments on the field notes to clarify points or answer queries I had raised. The third week I began audiotaping these conversations, which were normally about an hour in length. We met in a spare classroom in the school because the children ate in Ann's classroom and the staffroom was noisy. Twelve of our conversations were recorded, including two after the completion of the theme. Ann did not read the transcripts of our conversations although she knew she had access to them if she wished.

In our conversation about the Week One notes, I asked Ann if she wanted to continue reading all of my field notes. The notes were lengthy and there was some question from my university committee as to whether it was appropriate for Ann to read all of my notes. Ann said she wanted to continue to read the notes because she "saw times when I shouldn't have said anything." One of my committee members suggested that rather than photocopy an entire week's notes for Ann, I should show her only key scenes that I wanted expanded or explained. Another member of the committee felt that Ann provided a "second pair of eyes" on the classroom and children, and that it was valuable for her to read all of the notes. In, the end, Ann continued to read all of the field notes because that is what she and I agreed on. Much later, I realized that for us, this was a critical aspect of the collaborative relationship. Although we spent a great deal of time talking together about the children and what was happening in the classroom on a day-to-day basis, the noon-hour conversations allowed us time to sit, uninterrupted, and reflect on the children, the research, and social education. The written field notes captured enough of the lived experience so that Ann and I could use them to share personal interpretations and construct shared meanings. In our February 10th conversation, Ann said that she "wouldn't feel good" if I came into the classroom, wrote notes, left, and did not talk to her or share the notes. She explained, "I don't think I would agree to do it under those circumstances, I'd feel like I was being observed in a fishbowl, having no power over what you chose to see." Ann's reading of the field notes, and our conversations stemming from them, gave her the power to negotiate with me the meaning of our shared experience. For Ann, withholding the field notes meant that I controlled what was seen because she had no opportunity to know what I had recorded as my experience of the situation. She therefore had no opportunity to express her reality, compare it with mine and seek some agreement about what the meaning was. From the constructivist perspective, Bruner again provides insight when he states:

> Meaning is what we can agree upon or at least accept as a working basis for seeking agreement about the concept at hand . . . the reality is not the thing, not in the head, but in the act of arguing and negotiating about the meaning of such concepts. (1986, p. 22)

Ann became the "audience" for my field notes. I adopted a two-column format in my notebook. On the right hand side, I wrote my observations; on the left hand side I wrote questions and comments, many of them directed to Ann specifically. I virtually stopped trying to take verbatim field notes during my time in the school. The lengthy blocks of time and constant activity of the children made this impossible. Instead, I made a brief sequential list, while at school, of items I wanted to write about later in my expanded notes. I would write up the expanded notes each evening at home. Ann wrote responses and comments on her copies of the field notes and returned them to me. In this way, the notes not only served as a recording of what happened from my perspective and a starting place for our noon-hour conversations, they were also a "paper conversation" in their own right.

The Meaning of the Collaborative Relationship for Ann

In addition to viewing access to the field notes as power to negotiate meaning with me, Ann had some observations about the effect reading my notes had on her perception of her teaching and what was happening in the classroom. This became an item we discussed in our February 10th noon-hour conversation. One of my fellow graduate students asked me how much Ann's perceptions of what was happening were being affected by the reading of my field notes. I was not concerned about any effect, since I saw Ann's reading of my notes as part of how she and I were constructing meaning about the children and what was occurring in the classroom. In this context, there was no doubt that there was an effect; from the point of view of construction theory, this was part of Ann and I "making something" of our experiences. I asked Ann if she thought that reading my notes was affecting her perceptions of what was going on in the classroom. While she was my "second pair of eyes" I was her "words" for what was happening.

> A: I don't think in words . . . . I think in images and feelings. In past years when dealing with children and thinking, "this isn't working," . . . I don't have the words . . . there's all this feeling, this frustration coming, "this isn't right, this isn't right." And so I really have to sit down with myself and have a really good talk but sometimes I have to write it out for myself. So your observations on paper and knowing that you are making these observations on paper and that you are doing it in words, is actually helping me to become better at finding the words. (February 10 tape)

Ann wondered if the question had been asked because my colleague thought the teacher might change her behavior because of the researcher's presence and the written observations being made. Ann's point of view on this was that perhaps it could be a positive thing for the researcher's presence to change the teacher's behavior.

> A: Knowing that the researcher was going to be in the classroom and that it's the children's responses that are being analyzed, what kind of an adult would

> it take to not care what they were saying? And if [she] goes through four months of the researcher following [her] around and the adult has four months to practice being that careful teacher, sounds to me like good practice for the teacher. Maybe some of it will continue in the rest of [her] teaching. (February 10 tape)

Ann expressed that our collaborative relationship provided a second person to talk things over with, share perceptions and analyze problems.

> A: Last year I had Lila [intern teacher] and when something was going wrong, I found we'd talk about it. Two heads are always better than one. What one person perceives, another one doesn't. . . . And having you here, I don't know if I would have resolved the boredom problem as quickly as we did last week. I might have continued to stumble on and take another week's worth of boredom before I said, "Hey, wait a minute. I've got to do something to change here." And [it was] only because you felt the boredom too that [I was] forced to think, "Okay, what have we done in the past that got rid of the boredom, what made them come out of the shell?" (February 10 tape)

For me, this analysis by Ann of the benefit of having a second person in the classroom goes right to the heart of the collaborative relationship; it is in how the two people negotiate the meaning of the classroom experience, each coming with a differing perception which, in the sharing, enriches the possible meanings and the possible actions. Meaning is what we achieve by the sharing of human cognition.

I had been asking myself since my first week in the classroom what Ann was "getting" from what I was calling a collaborative relationship. The perspectives Ann shared with me about her understanding of collaboration helped me to realize that even in the language of the question, "what are you getting out of this?" there is embedded an external view, a view that there is some "thing" outside of the people involved that holds a promise of yielding some tangible riches. Ann did not feel she had to be part of a teacher-researcher project or earn university credit to "get something" from the collaborative relationship. Although she could have done these things, and that would have been fine, it would not have been the essence of the collaborative relationship, which for her was to be found in having a second person with whom to negotiate the meaning of the classroom experience. For myself, I began to see that meaning was not waiting in the classroom to be found, but that it was created through our collaborative relationship.

Ann and I also discussed a comment made by another colleague who felt it must be a strain for the teacher to have a researcher coming in because the teacher would not be able to change the timetable or plans. While Ann and I both agreed that this had not been a problem because we had both been flexible and able to communicate, Ann said she could see where the possibility of a problem could arise with "a different set of people." "I found it very comfortable to have you there. I know the children did too. They would always ask, 'Is Roberta coming today?'. . . . No, it was a really good experience" (May 5 tape).

Characteristic of our noon-hour conversations were the associations we made to books, friends, experiences, recollections, authorities who added to our conversations through the constructions we held that linked them to our topic of discussion. For example, as we explored the nature of our collaborative relationship in our February 10th conversation, and Ann shared that she would not have agreed to "being observed in a fishbowl," she commented on other teacher-researcher relationships she knew of:

A: It seems to me [that] Donald Graves . . . and Jane Hansen . . . saw themselves as working with the teacher.

R: That's right and that is the strength of that research . . . to me, what's so neat about that research is they don't even call it collaborative research and yet it is, to me, the essence of collaborative research. It's much more a "working with."

A: Yes and Jerome Harste and Carolyn Burke have done the same thing in Indiana. They have a school [that] they work out of all the time.

Ann also suggested that the collaborative relationship gave her perspective on her taken-for-granted, everyday lived world.

> It wasn't until you started expressing a couple of weeks ago that you had forgotten how complicated a typical day of an elementary classroom is and how tiring it was—you know, when you're in the rhythm of it you just think, "Well, this is life." You know, you just jog along. (February 10 tape)

There were other examples of this, which Ann did not mention, but that I became aware of through the transcripts of our conversations. The example of sensing and identifying the boredom of the children with the reading/question activity became apparent to me before Ann because I was not as totally immersed in the daily goings on as she was and was free to see and hear things she could not. Because the children viewed me as a resource person and not an authority figure, I sometimes saw and heard things Ann may not have. For this same reason, and also because I was in the classroom with the primary intention of researching, rather than teaching [Ann's intentions were the reverse], I constructed different meanings from what I saw happening than Ann did. This returns me to the essence and strengths of the collaborative relationship. Ann believed that the activities and talk facilitated by her, the decision-making and problem-solving strategies modelled by her, were influencing the children to learn. I was able to confirm, with specific examples over a lengthy period of time, that this and other things were indeed occurring. For example, Ann was "delighted" when I cited the many times I saw the children using a "majority rules" strategy to independently solve social and task-related problems. Similarly, when I focused on the peer talk, Ann was most interested in my observations, "What do they talk about?"

Ann saw benefit in my being able to "see" things that she may not have been able to because of her role as "teacher" caught up in the flow of taken-for-granted experience. She also said that my level of participation in the classroom was a benefit.

> During the class time . . . I really feel that it was a benefit to have you there because you participated. You didn't just sit back and watch what the children and I were doing. The children were able to use you as a resource and you spent a lot of time interacting with the children and I think that that is always an advantage for everyone in the room. Not just the children, but myself and hopefully yourself. (May 5 tape)

Ann was positive about my participation and definitive in her view of what her responsibilities to the classroom were. "I wouldn't expect anyone to be a collaborator in my classroom as a researcher and come in and give them responsibilities. I mean, I'm the one who is being paid for accepting those responsibilities" (May 5 tape).

After my time in Ann's classroom was over, she provided these written observations on the meaning of the collaborative relationship for her:

> Our Collaborative Relationship
>
> When Roberta approached me about the idea of doing research in my classroom, the theme for the time period had already been defined: Pioneers of Alberta. She assured me that I should plan my unit as I ordinarily would. As it was, I shared some of my ideas and goals and we discussed how this would affect her role. I would have felt very uncomfortable if she was going to come in and watch the "fish bowl" classroom, as I believe that everyone in a classroom needs to actively participate. Thus, for four months the children virtually had two teachers for theme time (integration of social studies, science, health, art, math and language; this particular theme leaned heavily towards social studies, art and language skills). I designed the four month program framework and specific activities prior to starting the theme. As the theme progressed, Roberta and I participated along with the children, documented our observations, and discussed these observations. Problems with activity designs were jointly solved. We did a lot of "What will we see if . . . ?", "What will happen if . . . ?"

> We jointly designed situations to test out our theories or to just learn by watching the children's responses.
>
> Roberta contributed material resources as well as energy to the theme. We were compatible partners in that my priority was to participate and facilitate the theme; Roberta's priority was to participate and document the theme. The children were informally evaluated by both of us as we discussed the behavior and projects prior to my formal written evaluation. Thus Roberta's observations greatly enhanced and extended my views for each child, as did my observations for her research.
>
> It was an extremely beneficial situation for the children, teacher and researcher. All of us were asking questions and seeking answers. (July, 1987)

In Ann's view the collaborative relationship meant we were all learners.

Conversation as Hermeneutic Understanding

Although using conversation as an aspect of conducting the research was not part of the original research design, as noted above, the noon-hour conversations became a critical element in how Ann and I negotiated and constructed meaning. Bruner has termed the constructivist view of meaning making as "negotiatory or 'hermeneutic' or transactional" (1986, p. 22). Carson (1984) used conversation as a method of research in his investigation of the meaning of curriculum implementation. "My concern in this study is as a participant in the conversation about curriculum implementation. As such I want to look at conversation from the perspective of how what is spoken about relates to reality. My interest is in the topic of conversation itself" (1984, p. 64). Carson draws on the works of Gadamer and Barthes to construct his meanings about the nature of conversation. For Carson, Gadamer raised the "hermeneutic priority of the question . . . ." The question, by admitting to this absolute finitude of experience creates a structure of openness which allows us insight into the way we typically view the world" (1984, p. 63). Carson goes on to explain that:

> conversation is related to questioning in the sense that participants in conversation are directed by a sense of openness, by something presently indeterminate which is worthwhile talking about. The topic, and the world to which the topic belongs are held in common by the conversants, but the question arrives during the course of conversation, in Gadamer's words it "presses itself upon us" as the negativity of experience counters preconceived opinion. (1984, p. 63)

In this research, the question which "arrived" during the noon-hour conversations and continued to be present for Ann and me related to "what does it mean to learn and to teach?" Our conversations about what we saw the children doing and saying, about the meanings they were constructing and conveying, and about the meanings we were constructing and conveying, inevitably took us back to the question of "what does it mean to learn and to teach?" Are we world makers or world receivers?

Barthes provided for Carson an image of conversation as "loose bundles of images which are recognizable immediately and bring to mind other instances 'like this.' Associations follow a logic of happenstance, hence the movement of conversation is not linear" (1984, p. 65). The noon-hour conversations of Ann and me were characterized by associations, examples, recollections and reference to "books, experiences, friends and authorities" (1984, p. 66).

In Carson's research, he was a participant in conversations about the meaning of curriculum implementation with people who were involved in various aspects of that process. He suggests that the possibility of hermeneutic understanding is present in conversation where participants speak about the meaning of their activity because, in such conversations, "the negativity of experience forces us to realize that the hopes for school improvement lie beyond current implementation practices"

(1984, p. 68). As interpretations about the meaning of experiences are shared, formalized curriculum documents and implementation strategies are seen in contrast to participants' lived experiences. Carson suggests that hermeneutical understanding is also present in the practical interest of participants because, "practical interest, as opposed to the technical interest, implicates the participants in an active reflection on their own activities and is oriented towards doing" (1984, p. 68). Carson argues that these two characteristics add an element of "distanciation" to conversation as a mode of hermeneutic research. He suggests that the potential for hermeneutic understanding is enhanced in his research by "making the conversations themselves texts available for reflection" (1984, p. 68). He terms this a "supplementary distanciation," which allows for the participants' reflection on meanings that may have been revealed in the conversations.

In the research Ann and I experienced, the noon-hour conversations were an ongoing element of our meaning making. They were not a method, but rather a natural outgrowth of our attempts to construct personal and shared understanding of our specific experience of the pioneer theme and our general experience of teaching and learning. This was different from Carson's experience in that Ann and I had an immediate common lived experience, which was the starting place of our conversations and led to reflection on the deeper meaning of teaching and learning. In Carson's research, conversation was used to explore the general meaning of curriculum implementation. The nature of the collaborative relationship, particularly a common interest in the same general questions about children and learning, also added a dimension of shared interest to this study. Ann and I not only experienced the conversations together, we were experiencing the topic of the conversations together. The possibility of hermeneutic understanding was evident as the question of what it meant to teach and learn became a pervasive element of our noon-hour conversations as our experience of the curriculum unit was juxtaposed with the formal curriculum objectives. Hermeneutic understanding was also evident in the way in which our active reflection on what we saw the children saying and doing led us to modify and change our actions as the theme unfolded. Our written text, which allowed us to "go back over" events, was the field notes. These stopped the flow of events in time and allowed us to reflect not only on the meanings of the events but on the conversations about the events.

Conversation is intrinsic to the collaborative relationship as language is used to construct and convey meanings, just as conversation is intrinsic to teaching and learning. While hermeneutic understanding may be said to have resulted from our conversations, this is a construction I have placed on the activity as another way of looking at it, another perspective on what happened, another reality, another possible world. For Ann and me the sharing of realities through the noon-hour conversations was our way of "making something" of our experience; as we negotiated the meanings of what was happening we created new realities and meanings through the sharing of our human cognitions.

Research as Evolving Relationship

The nature of the collaborative relationship meant that the research was always tentative. The meanings of the relationship evolved and what is presented here is after-the-fact, reflective. Although, from the outset, both Ann and I "knew more than we could tell," what we have now been able to make explicit about the relationship was, at the time, more implicit and, as has been documented, became more explicit through the talk and writing associated with our noon-hour conversations as reflection on the lived experience of being together in the classroom. The research design, then, was tentative and evolving. During the first and second weeks, the noon-hour conversations and the place of the field notes became explicit. I became more comfortable with my role in participating and documenting, although Ann and I both realized that in this role, with the way the children had such freedom of movement and speech, that documentation in the traditional sense was going to be a challenge.

During the first week, I spent four full afternoons in the classroom. As a fledgling researcher, I was awkward and uncertain about just about everything; when and where I should write notes, how much I should write, was I writing too much about the teacher when my focus was on the children. I soon realized that the structure of this room was going to make note taking and any kind of audio or video recording very difficult. The teacher-directed portions of theme time were short. There were no social studies lessons in the traditional sense of the teacher providing certain information and individual children working on questions or activities at their desks. The classroom was full of movement and talk. It had taken me six hours to write up the first four hours I had been in the school. On the third day I was in the classroom, Ann said that she was watching me and wondering how I could focus and concentrate on making sense of what was happening when the classroom allowed for so much open-endedness. She wondered out loud if it wouldn't be easier for me to be in a classroom that was more structured and where all the children were being taught the same thing at the same time. I had hoped that Ann and I could work together for the very reason that her classroom was full of movement and talk that encouraged children to construct their meanings. It seemed ironic that this very environment made it difficult for me as "researcher" to find out what the children were doing and what meanings they were constructing. I discussed my questions about the note taking with a committee member and she reassured me that I was not expected to be a human recording device and that I should not even try to capture several hours of classroom experience in notes. She suggested that I record shorter segments of time, no longer than 20 minutes and told me to have faith in myself as a researcher, that over time I would begin to see patterns and themes in the experience I was living through. In reflecting on the experience in May, after the completion of the theme, Ann mentioned again that she saw the tradeoff for my participation as, "It didn't allow you to be as objectively observant of the four people that you were interested in." While it is true, that after we had chosen the "profile" children, because they were never all in the same place at once, I couldn't always see what each child was doing. I have come to realize that participating with the children, being there as they worked, acting as a resource person was an excellent way to document, and perhaps the only way in that classroom. I have also realized that my field notes were only one piece of information. I had the transcripts of our noon-hour conversations, the writing, drawing, modelling of the children, some taped, spontaneous peer conversation, one formal taped interview with every child in the room, and two with the "profile" children as well as taped interviews with seven parents.

Ann and I discussed how the research might have worked if I had removed the children from the classroom, after theme time, or on a regular basis to formally ask them questions and tape them. Again, the structure of the classroom, the amount of time spent, the children's independence in working on activities did not seem to lend itself to this. I was more interested in what they were saying and doing during the natural flow of theme time.

R: And I also felt that I didn't want to remove the children. I didn't want to remove them while they were working on their things and maybe that was partly my problem but I somehow felt I was disturbing something.

A: I can tell you right now. My second guess is that they would have been annoyed with you.

Choosing the Children to Profile

The collaborative relationship meant that Ann and I decided together which four children to profile. This was also a tentative and evolving process and was more a matter of the children "making themselves known" to us. During the first week, I participated and tried to get to know the children and classroom routine. Ann and I had not made any explicit plans about how we were going to identify four children. During Week Two, as I commented to Ann about the detail in the theme journal entries prompted by the field trip to the schoolhouse, and particularly mentioned Penney's entry, Ann said that Penney was like that and that maybe she would be an interesting child to look at in-depth. Penney seemed to work alone quite often and barely responded, if at all, when I spoke to her. She had never sought me out, as many of the other children had, to ask a question or share work with me. I did not feel I had a lot of rapport with her and made a note to discuss this further with Ann.

My third week in the school, Ann came into the staffroom, exploding with a story about Adam, who was apparently about two months behind the other grade three children in completing work from the math textbook. Ann, in consultation with the parents, let him go at his own pace. This Tuesday morning, Adam had asked Ann for an end of chapter test. She pulled one from a file, gave it to him, and later went over to see how he was doing. Adam said it was "kind of hard" but Ann noted that he had a page or so done. On closer examination, she realized that she had given him the "subtraction" test instead of the "addition." Adam had not yet "done" the "subtraction" chapter, nor had he had any formal instruction on the concepts. Ann looked at the questions he had done and found that Adam had most of them correct. Ann said that Adam was continually amazing her and it occurred to me that Adam might be an interesting child to profile.

In our Tuesday noon-hour conversation of that third week, as we focused on what we saw happening with individual children, we talked about Brenda. She had been in Ann's group at the reconstructed fort and had written a very clear description in her journal of that day on the uses of a "moss bag" [deerskin bag filled with moss in which native babies were carried]. This was Brenda's journal entry:

> Today I learned that indian children and adults wiped their selfs with moss (the babys used them for diapers).

My written response was:

> You know Brenda I learned this today too! I've never thought about what Indian people used for toilet paper. I thought the "moss bag" they carried the babies in was neat and very clever! I wonder what the pioneers did?

Ann said that Brenda had been very intrigued by the moss bag and had wanted to talk about it in the car on the way back from the fort. Ann was able to provide some background about Brenda that assisted us in discussing Brenda's journal entry:

> A: Well first of all, Brenda is not afraid to bring up any topic. No matter what it is. She has a very polite way of referring to all body parts. All the time. And if she has a question, she's quite up front. . . . She is also one of the few

> children that has a vocabulary for bringing up that topic without it sounding silly or rude. And that is just part of her home life.

We also discussed that Brenda had chosen to write on an historical theme for the writing they had been completing Monday.

Ann had responded to my comments about not feeling much rapport with Penney. Her written comments below helped me to understand Penney's response to me:

> She's very quiet and unobtrusive. She is very sensitive to any kind of [patronage] towards her—turns her right off. She seeks out "earned" approval for her work. As well, she is very loyal and she's in love with me—her parents say her praises for me fill their house.

In our conversation, Ann and I discussed this again, agreeing that Penney would be an interesting child to "profile" as part of the research.

I also mentioned that I had been thinking about Adam as a child to "profile" and that Ann's story at noon about Adam and the math test had further led me to believe this.

A: Just fascinates me.

R: I thought now there's one that might be really interesting from my point of view and from your point of view, as well, to spend a bit of extra time on.

A: Plus the fact that in grades one and two Meryl [the grade one/two teacher] and I just watched him and I saw her pull him laboriously through grade one and two, him kicking and howling all the way.

Ann explained that Meryl worked very hard to have Adam finish his work and keep up with the rest of the class.

I was interested that Adam appeared to be two months behind the other children, but could do the math test for chapters he had not yet completed.

A: He must have one eye on the pot and one eye on the cooker, or up the chimney, because here he did this whole test and he never did any of the work.

R: But some of the other kids had already gone through that so he would have heard what's going on.

A: Oh yes, the rest had already finished that chapter before Christmas. Yes. Yes, I would agree. I would look at Adam because I think there are lots of children like Adam and he talks slow and your initial reaction to him is, oh, what's this dumb kid doing here.

A: He's not ready for grade three, but he is.

R: Well, he was in my car when we were at the fort and even then, the stuff he said . . . and his journal, he writes some profound stuff in there.

A: I know, not much, but profound.

R: Not much, but what he does is really . . . thoughtful, I guess. It's not just a listing of what he saw or in sequence like some of the kids do.

A: He makes generalized statements . . . he gets the big picture.

During the course of our Week Four conversation, Ann and I made a final decision on the four children whom we would profile. We had been discussing the theme journal as a vehicle for interaction with the children, particularly for me. Ann had mentioned that she had noticed in the journals that I was able to let the children know about the kinds of things I was observing or wanting to know about. In response to a question I asked in one child's journal, she had written, "Do I have to answer these questions?" I had written back to say that it would really be helpful to me if she would. The child had responded by writing, "Well, okay." Ann and I were particularly interested in Timothy's theme journal because he was carrying on a running "paper conversation" with us, not only answering our questions, but asking us questions.

R: I really like what Timothy's doing . . . with asking questions. It's really neat. I was thinking, speaking again now about individual children to follow, I think I'll go with Penney and Adam and I was thinking maybe Timothy would be an interesting one too.

A: You'll find Timothy interesting because of the fact that, and I can't figure this out, when I had individual conversations and related with any of the

> [family name] children, and there are five of them and I've known all five of them, they come across as really with-it people. Their parents have obviously carried on very direct conversations with them. It's a very cooperative household, it's not an authoritarian one, and yet Dad and Mom still give the bottom line . . . but the children are quite expressive in how they feel, not to the point of being derogatory or insulting but they have the language to express how they feel about something and they are not afraid to ask questions . . . . They [the five children] are already reading far above their reading level and Timothy right now is reading at about a grade six level . . . Timothy comes across as a grade five student in his writing ability, how he puts sentences together, how he takes ideas and puts them together and how he works out problems.

We now had identified three children to "profile," two boys and one girl, two children from grade three, Adam and Penney, and one from grade four, Timothy. Grade and gender had not been a major deciding factor in choosing these three children but as Ann and I discussed a possible fourth child, we did try to look for a grade four girl, since this would give us a balance in terms of grade and gender.

We discussed three possible grade four girls and decided on Brenda. We had discussed Brenda before, when her journal entry after the fort field trip had piqued our interest.

> A: I think you will find that it will make your life easier to choose someone like Brenda or [ ] if she was going to be around because they would be very verbal about how they are thinking. They'll think out loud, they'll say, "Well if this goes like this, then that means this has got to happen." You see, they talk like that.

As we talked about the various children in the classroom, their home backgrounds, their unique personalities and ways of learning in the classroom, we realized that each one was interesting and that choosing four to profile was a necessity due to time, rather than a lack of anything on the part of any of the children in the class.

It had taken four weeks to make a decision on four children to profile. We were already a third of the way through the theme, having recognized that it was going to take longer than the nine weeks originally planned. This would have been a problem if the research was to be based on interviewing children after lessons, rather than on the shared perceptions of teacher and researcher and on what the children said and did during theme time. As it was, my field notes and our noon-hour conversations had been focusing on individual children and what was happening in the classroom right from day one. All the children had been keeping theme journals, also from the first day of the new theme. All of the children were used to having me sit with their groups, talk with them about their work and act as a resource person. Once the profile children had been identified, my role in the classroom did not change significantly. I did attempt to spend time where those children were working, but since this was primarily in different groups, my classroom circulation did not change much. Ann and I did not tell the four children nor their parents that we were observing and documenting them more carefully. We had permission from all of the parents to interview the children, make photocopies of their work, and talk to them about what they were doing. I continued to read all of the journals daily and comment in them, and eventually did interview all of the children once, and seven of the parents.

What did it mean then to be a "profile" child? I kept a file on each of the four children and retained photocopies of all their written work, including their journals, research reports, group poetry, responses to readings/questions. Ann also provided information to me on the four children that she thought was of interest and that occurred while I was not in the classroom. This included anecdotes and copies of written work; for example, some other stories of Adam's, and Penney's response on the district test. The profile children were interviewed a second time. I had their interviews transcribed, which I did not do for all the children, although in the first interview I asked all of the children the same questions and did retain the audiotapes of my conversations with them. I did make sure that I interviewed a parent of the profile children, among the parents interviewed. The parents were aware that the research Ann and I were doing would be used as part of a doctoral dissertation, and that the anonymity of particular children, the teacher and the school would be guaranteed. In our noon-hour conversations, Ann and I did focus more on the meanings of what the four children were doing and saying, but not to the exclusion of other children. As Ann and I had concluded when we made a decision about who the four children would be, it was a necessity of time and energy to choose four from whom to gather the specific information. Each was constructing meaning about his or her theme experience and had an individual story to tell. It was because of this, and because of my active participation in the classroom over a long period of time, that I felt a responsibility to formally interview all of the children.

The Meaning of Collaborative Relationship for the Children

Just as there had been an initial question for me about what Ann was "getting out of" the research, this same question arose for me with regard to the children. Was this a collaborative relationship for them as well? What did it mean for them to be participants rather than subjects of the research? Ann and I explored this idea from the fourth week of the research.

One of Ann's early comments on "what the children get out of the research" was triggered by a book she had read by Lucy Calkins called *Lessons from a Child*. Ann said that when she read this book, which described the writing process of an eight year old, she felt relief because she had been expecting so much from her students. The examples given in the book helped her to "relax" and see that the children she worked with were like the one in the book and were doing just fine. She saw the classroom research described in the book as benefitting the children she taught because it gave her perspective as the teacher. Ann also talked about benefit in our specific situation in terms of "having a second body in the classroom whom the children could ask questions of and get assistance from." She also mentioned my interest in them and their learning as being of benefit to them. An internal/external question was again raised by our conversation. If the children didn't get an external reward such as a treat of some kind, what did they "get"? Ann made this observation:

> And my response is that I hope the children get the satisfaction of sharing and feel the honest sense of care about them coming from you. It seems to me that they should feel important and valued and worthwhile, knowing and sensing that another human being cares. And that's my major objective with these children. (January 27 tape)

I suggested that although giving the children an external show of appreciation for their participation in research could be seen as an artificial kind of benefit, that it at least recognized the contributions of the children and was "probably better than previous times when that type of research has been done where people ignore the kids completely." Ann responded,

> But you're not, you see, my next point was that you're acting as a resource person in my classroom. You're not turning people away when they come to you and saying, "No, I'm sorry I'm just here to observe." You're acting as a resource person. That's a reward for them. I mean they have two resource people in the room instead of one. (January 27 tape)

The children did use me as a resource person, and felt quite open to reject or accept my advice, or to "go ask Ann" as a double check. Ann said the children felt "comfortable" having me there and when I wasn't there asked if I would be coming that day. I thoroughly enjoyed acting as a resource person and found that working with the children jolted me out of my "taken-for-granted" daily experience. I felt comfortable interviewing the children, with the exception of Penney. In retrospect, I think perhaps Ann should have interviewed her as well because I did not ever feel that I established good rapport with her. She was reluctant to talk into the tape recorder but said I could tape her. In our second interview, after the theme was complete, as I turned the tape recorder off she almost shouted at me, "Why are you asking me that? Don't you know the answer to that question? Aren't you asking all the kids the same question?" I explained to Penney, as I had done at the beginning of both interviews, that I was interested in what she thought. I discussed her reaction with Ann in our May 5th conversation and she thought perhaps Penney didn't understand the purpose of the interviews.

That some of the children were interested in what I was learning about them was revealed in some of their comments to me. For example, the day that Brenda looked up from the crazy quilt she and Timothy were making for the research report she said, "Well, Roberta, have you learned anything yet?" Timothy posed a similar question at another point, "Are you studying us so you can teach other classes?" Adam, at the end of our first interview, asked in response to my question of whether there was anything he wanted to ask me, "Why do you want to learn about kids?"

When Ann and I discussed what benefit the collaborative relationship was to the children, she suggested that I share some of my writing about my learning with the children:

> I'm sure these children would be interested to have you share a little bit of your writing, what you've seen in them, even if when you were with them you used their names over some particularly unusual anecdotes or whatever. Then they would realize the kinds of things

> that you are observing and what your role had meant in there. You know, I think that they would appreciate that. (January 27 tape)

We discussed this further and Ann said she thought that the sharing taking place in the theme journal was serving that purpose.

The collaborative relationship meant that Ann was part of the evolving research design and that the traditional "analysis of the research" became very much a sharing of human cognition as we looked together at the children and what was happening in the classroom. The collaborative relationship meant for the research that we did not look for meanings but rather created them through negotiating the meaning of our experience. We were world makers.

CHAPTER V

THE CURRICULUM CONTEXT

Introduction

The previous chapter outlined some of the contexts transacting in Ann's classroom, including the school and classroom setting, the parental expectations and involvement, Ann's own constructs about children, social studies and the operation of her classroom, and the collaborative research context. This chapter is intended to provide a summary of the nine-week social studies theme, which in fact became 13 weeks, from the curricular and teaching point of view. The "content-specific" and "teacher-specific" outcomes (Eisner) or the planned and taught curriculum will be outlined. Also included in this chapter as another context, is what the four profile children and their parents told me about their previous experiences related to the theme of pioneers. The student-specific or experienced curriculum, the realities the children constructed, will be the topic of subsequent chapters.

Social Studies as a Subject Matter/Social Studies in Alberta: Historical Context

Social studies is a complex construction that has been marked by major philosophical and epistemological issues since its inception. Beverly Armento states:

> A range of opinion exists on the basic issues in the field: the definition of the goals, the nature and role of knowledge, the scope and focus of the field, the role of social sciences and social issues, the appropriateness of alternative instructional methodologies, and the definition of most of the key constructs, including citizenship, decision making, reflective inquiry, and problem solving. (1986, p. 943)

Armento, and Stanley, who has also recently reviewed the state of social studies research, both seem to suggest that the primary concern of social studies tends to be defined as citizenship education. The "three traditions" model (Barr, Barth, & Shermis, 1977), although prompting criticism, has been influential in directing thinking about how citizenship education is accomplished.

This model hypothesizes that there are three distinct philosophical positions --based on purpose, goals, methodology, and content--which guide social studies education. These are termed citizenship transmission, social science and reflective inquiry.

The citizenship transmission tradition assumes that certain values, knowledge and skills are hallmarks of democratic society and need to be transmitted, "given" to learners. This tradition mirrors a transmission view of learning and emphasizes an objective, empirical and scientific approach to learning about reality.

In the social science tradition, the focus of citizenship education is on the structure, methodology and knowledge of the social sciences. In his review, Stanley (1985) suggests that the social science tradition was heavily influenced by the early work of Bruner.

The reflective inquiry tradition emphasizes citizenship education as a process of decision making about social problems. This view of social studies stems from a constructivist perspective. Stanley states that the roots of this approach can be traced to Dewey's concept of a problem, which revolves around the notion that the problem must be construed by the learner as a problem. This is different from the more positivistic orientations of the social science tradition where problems are preselected by social scientists. In the reflective inquiry tradition, citizenship is perceived as a process of social-political decision making. Stanley quotes from Barth and Shermis (1970) in discussing the two key assumptions upon which this decision making rests:

> The first is the socio-political framework of democracy "which rests upon a belief that all are called upon either to make the rules which govern them or . . . to select someone to do so." The second assumption involves a unique definition of decision making.
>
> > [It] is assumed to take place in ambiguous situations and any given choice is not between good and evil but between what is perceived to be and what is taken to be better (or what is thought to be bad and what might be worse).
>
> Thus citizenship education can be defined as a process in which students learn to make decisions regarding significant social problems current affecting or likely to affect them. (1985, p. 313)

Reflective inquiry, in the constructive tradition, construes social studies as a process rather than as content.

The three traditions model is one way of construing the field of social studies. Stanley cites many other "mainstream" approaches, as well as those he categorizes as "revisionist" (1985). He suggests that these terms are intended to describe "tendencies" rather to be definitive. The intention here is not to review the many and varied attempts at rationale building in social education, but rather to acknowledge that it is a complex construction.

The history of social studies in Alberta reveals its own unique story with respect to which "traditions" have dominated curriculum decision making. The 1940 *Programme of Studies for the Elementary School*, authorized by the Department of Education, discusses the "continuous struggle between those forces and educational procedures which formalize the school and those which make it a place of natural freedom" (1940, p. 22). Under the influence of the Progressive Education Movement, the Alberta Department of Education introduced a new scheme of organization into the schools in 1936. The ideas, attitudes and practices inherent in this organization were seen to be part of the Progressive Activity Movement. One of the most important principles stated in the 1940 *Programme of Studies* was "that the growing and developing child must be regarded as the central figure in the organized activities of the modern school" (1940, p. 3); "the child and not the subject takes first place" (1940, p. 23).

In order to facilitate this child-centered focus, the elementary school was divided into divisions, subject areas were integrated (geography and history became social studies), and an activity program called the Enterprise was introduced. The Enterprise was defined in the 1940 *Programme of Studies* as "an informalized classroom activity of the pupils that has a meaning within the world of their experience, a purpose which they freely accept and a value which they desire" (1940, p. 29). The Enterprise was viewed as a procedure and was prescribed for work in social studies, science and health (which were integrated) and was expected for the "greater part" of work in other subject areas. But the tension between formalized teaching and natural freedom was still evident, as this excerpt from the 1936 *Programme of Studies* suggests:

> It will be possible, therefore, for the teacher either to use the enterprise procedure, or to present the material of the outlines in a series of formal lessons. In actual practice, however, the teacher will not find it desirable to follow exclusively either the Enterprise procedure or that of formal teaching. (Cited in *Elementary Curriculum Guide*, Department of Education, 1964, p. 5)

Between 1936 and 1964, although the Enterprise procedure continued to be a central focus of elementary programs, it seemed to have become associated more closely with subject matter, particularly in social studies. The 1949 Bulletin 2, *Program of Studies for the Elementary School*, emphasized that "an adequate body of accurate facts must be mastered for every topic upon which an Enterprise is attempted" (1949, p. 15). The publication also stated that one of the basic features of the Enterprise "pattern" was major emphasis on social studies. Health and science were to continue as integrated phases of the Enterprise but "items difficult to integrate with the units of work may be handled as Parallel Activities" (1949, p. 17). The specific social situations which were to act as the focus of the Enterprise were suggested but the final choice was left to the teacher and the class.

By 1958, the Department of Education publication, *Methods: The Enterprise*, states:

> The child learns about people and the ways they have found to live together successfully. This is the very core of the Enterprise. In more traditional programs of study it is given a special place and named Social Studies. (1958, p. 3)

Although this document still discusses the Enterprise as a method, it outlines a sequence of Enterprises and the importance of defining carefully both the general attitudes, skills and understandings every Enterprise should develop and the specific "major learnings or understandings" that would arise from study of a particular topic.

A 1959 Royal Commission on Education recommended that "the Enterprise program be more closely structured and that the ordering of subject matter be more sequential" (*Elementary Curriculum Guide for Social Studies-Enterprise*, Interim, 1964, p. 6). The 1964 guide reflected these recommendations and placed "new emphasis on both prescribed content and the suggested methods of instruction" (1964, p. 6). The hyphenated title of the 1964 guide, Social Studies-Enterprise reflects the close association of the two—Enterprise had changed from being a child-centered procedure to subject-centered content.

The 1971 social studies program, *Experiences in Decision-Making*, eliminated reference to the Enterprise completely and reflected the conceptualization of social studies as reflective inquiry. There was a strong values orientation and a backing away from the prescriptiveness of the 1964 program. Although this program was hailed as a pioneering curriculum on the North American social studies scene, its time was short-lived. The Downey Report of 1975 suggested there were problems with implementation of the visionary program, not the least of which was the lack of teacher commitment to the philosophical orientations of the program. The recommendations of this report led to further specification and prescriptiveness in the Alberta social studies programs of 1978 and 1981. Although social studies continued to be defined as inquiry and decision making, the *1981 Alberta Social Studies Curriculum*, with its preselected issues, highly prescriptive knowledge, values and skills objectives, and asserted or implied conclusions to the decision-making process, falls into the category Stanley describes as short-circuiting the inquiry process with a "pseudo problem-solving approach" (1985, p. 324). Yet another revision to the Alberta social studies, currently underway, promises to erode even further any vestiges of constructivist, "progressive", or reflective inquiry influence. The last 50 years show a dramatic shift in Alberta away from child-centered to subject-centered curriculum; away from learners directing and planning their learning to the centralized authority of Alberta Education direction. Although the potential for social studies programs consistent with a constructivist perspective has existed in Alberta, it has not been realized.

The Curriculum Reality: The Alberta Social Studies Curriculum

The *1981 Alberta Social Studies Curriculum* set forth the provincial mandate under which social studies in Alberta classrooms was to operate during the time that the research was taking place in Ann's classroom. Social studies was defined as "the school subject in which students learn to explore and, where possible, to resolve, social issues that are of public and personal concern" (1981, p. 1). The curriculum document stated that social issues had been selected "to acknowledge that the real world is neither 'all good' nor 'all bad' and that human achievements, enterprise, and ingenuity represent a significant, though not total, dimension of social reality" (1981, p. 1). Effective citizenship was stated as the "ultimate goal" of the social studies and was defined as characterized by "intellectual independence, moral maturity and effective involvement in the political, economic and social affairs" of the community (1981, p. 1). The social sciences, history in particular, were to provide the content for inquiry into social studies.

Werner points out that formalized school programs such as social studies are themselves, "perspectives on man [sic] and the social world. They transmit to teachers and students a selected image of what it is to be human, of what man should be, or of what should be done concerning the social world" (1977, p. 350). Human beings construct programs and bring their own constructions of social reality to the task. Werner identifies "reality coordinates" that "provide the outer survey pegs, as it were, within which legitimate reality concerning man is to be constructed with[in] classrooms and according to which the student's experience of the social world is to be oriented" (1977, p. 82). Program developers, either implicitly or explicitly, develop programs by selecting, from multiple realities, how we are to know man (e.g., phenomenologically, religiously, scientifically) and from multiple thought models on how we are to think about man (e.g., subject organization, rules for observation and description, question selection). This selection is made against an implicit background or "horizon" of the world conception held by the program developers as members of their particular society and culture.

Formal programs tend to take on lives of their own; they are not viewed as having been developed by people who themselves hold certain constructions of reality that could be open to negotiation. Werner suggests that "legitimate social reality is defined and transmitted" (1977, p. 97) by program developers and becomes "taken-for-granted" and "unquestionably accepted" by teachers and children.

> Such activity [program development] is presupposed on someone's belief that the social world is as he experiences it with his fellowman, and as the various disciplines describe it for him. The construction of programs on the basis of someone's interests, presuppositions, and approaches directed to man is not made explicit, and the concepts and methods utilized for describing man tend to remain unquestioned as if these structures were somehow in the world apart from the activity of man. (Werner, 1977, p. 100)

From the constructivist stance, social studies programs have built into them the perspectives of the program developers. Similarly, teachers and children come to the social studies program with perspectives on the social world shaped by their own constructions. The Alberta social studies program encountered by Ann and the children reflected a theoretic reality (Werner) where the social sciences were used as a lens through which to view the social world. "Theoretic reality coordinates used in social studies as a context for viewing man are derived primarily from the general domains of science, philosophy, and history" (1977, p. 87). Werner suggests that using a social science reality to look at man requires that children set aside their lived experiences and common-sense definitions in favor of "laws, formulae, correlations and causal relations, maps, historical exemplars, specialized languages, textbooks, methodological rules and typologies" (1977, p. 87). Any single reality transmitted by a program "constrains student and teacher thinking by providing them with one mode-of-being among many which are possible" (1977, p. 90).

The Alberta social studies program had a multidisciplinary subject organization with a particular focus on history and geography. Program developers had selected topics, social issues and competing values, and objectives (knowledge, value, skill) as the major components of the program. Topics were chosen from the social sciences, based on the "expanding horizons" concept of student development and interest. Issues were to reflect a conflict between competing values and the objectives were to be interrelated. Values were seen as encompassing understanding of distinctive human values, development of competencies in value analysis, decision making and moral reasoning, and development of positive attitudes toward self, others and the environment. Knowledge was construed as facts (questions to guide inquiry), concepts and generalizations and seen as accumulating sequentially. Skills included inquiry and participation skills, set forth in a "generalized model of social inquiry" (Appendix III). Seventy-five percent of the program had prescribed topics, issues and objectives and was considered the "core." The "elective" portion was allocated 25 percent of program time and was to allow for topics and issues to be chosen by teachers and students "preferably in consultation with parents and community groups and agencies." It was suggested that the topics should "help students develop an understanding of current concerns of local, provincial, national and international levels" (1981, p. 9).

The curriculum topic within which Ann was working was Grade Three, "Topic B: Lifestyles of Canadians in Other Times" (Appendix IV). Ann also incorporated the "early settlement" portion of a Grade Four topic, "Topic B: Alberta, Past, Present and Future: Our Human Resources" (Appendix V). Despite the curriculum guide language, teachers at both grade levels commonly referred to these units as "doing the pioneer unit." The study of "pioneers" at these grade levels predated the 1981 social studies curriculum.

While the social studies program did contain an "elective" portion, it was only one quarter of the time allotment; and although the program developers had stated it was to be chosen by teachers and students, the caveats seemed restrictive in allowing for the genuine interests of children and teachers. From the above summary, it seems justifiable to describe this social studies program as viewing knowledge as external to the individual. This could be said to reflect the constructions of the program developers. In addition, knowledge was viewed as linear, sequential, fixed in time and predictable. The worlds of teachers and children were acknowledged as follows:

> So long as the intent and meaning of the issue are preserved, teachers are encouraged to modify specific wording to suit their own preferences and those of their students. (1981, p. 4)

> The Alberta Social Studies Curriculum emphasizes the place of generalizations in the structure of knowledge, and the importance of students developing their own generalizations from concepts and factual information. (1981, p. 6)

> The model [inquiry model] can be expanded or modified in numerous creative ways to suit specific topics, disciplinary emphasis, resources and student maturity. (1981, p. 6)

> Teachers will frequently find that the range of prescribed skills is too narrow to enable the prescribed issue to be researched comprehensively, and are encouraged to incorporate additional specific skills from the master list on page 8. (1981, p. 6)

> During inquiry, as an issue takes on a new perspective, students will frequently find it necessary to "double back" to steps covered previously. Social studies students, like researchers and citizens intent on resolving social problems, should be guided by a purposeful and systematic approach to problem-solving while allowing for deviations in procedures on the basis of intuition, dead-ends and such realities as schedules and available resources. (1981, p. 7)
>
> Also many incidental materials are used by teachers because of their topical relevance. In such cases, teachers must exercise sound professional judgment, since they could be held accountable for an injudicious choice. (1981, p. 11)

In the 1981 Alberta social studies program, children and teachers are world receivers.

The Planned Curriculum: Ann's Construction of the Social Studies Theme

The planned curriculum, as distinguished from the formal curriculum program, is what and how Ann planned for the social studies theme. The planned curriculum was constructed by Ann within the contexts of her beliefs about children and learning, her personal constructs about social studies, the beliefs of the Alternative Program and her constructs of the formal written curriculum.

Ann explained to a group of parents how she worked within the framework of the formal curriculum:

> When I'm planning a unit, I take firstly the curriculum materials that are given to me by Urban School Board, which is designed after Alberta curriculum. I get something like this [grade three curriculum guide pages] and we're told that topic 3B is to look at lifestyles of Canadians in other times and there's a whole blurb about what they want us to particularly emphasize—economic, psychological and cultural consequences of choices made. As you'll see this evening, those kinds of things in my kind of planning come through in an indirect kind of way. I don't set out to do that through a particular assignment. It comes through the daily acquisition of knowledge. But we get that general overview and then we're told that we have to teach values [shows curriculum guide objectives] and there isn't a teacher alive who finds that an easy thing to do. And instead of saying, alright, I'm going to plan a lesson where personal behavior will reflect the

> values of self-reliance and cooperation, I have the children do an activity and I hope that through doing that activity and talking about it later, that they will come to these conclusions themselves; but I would never set that out in front of them.
>
> Then from there we go to knowledge objectives [shows curriculum guide objectives] and again this is still coming from the curriculum that's designed by experts. We're supposed to look at lifestyles, settlement, goals, aspirations and community. And then it gives us some questions to guide inquiry. I really deal with these a lot. I feel that this is where the children can really delve into it . . . . And even in the things we share with you tonight, you're going to see that they keep answering these questions over and over again. And I feel that that's where elementary social studies is at. We have to give the children a base. And I don't think that they can construct values until they have that knowledge base.
>
> Then, as well as knowledge, we're supposed to do skills. And we have a whole long list of them . . . . Again all of these things will come through the way you see children handling daily assignments and the way you hear them talking about the things that they remember as the unit went along.
>
> Anyway, I'm given all of that and I then proceed to design a unit. (Taken from transcript of a joint presentation by Ann and I to parents, October 14)

Ann explained to me in our April 13th noon-hour conversation how she designed her unit within all the "givens" of the formal curriculum. Taking a "theme" approach, which was part of the Alternative Program beliefs about the integrated nature of knowledge, meant that not only did Ann recognize the role of language, particularly talk, in creating meaning but she also combined a grade three curriculum topic and a grade four curriculum topic that overlapped in some of the objectives and in the focus on "pioneers." She also had definite beliefs about what knowledge she wanted the children to have.

> First of all I start off realizing that I've got a split grade [grade threes and grade fours] and there are some different kinds of skills that are supposed to be met in Three B and Four B [curriculum guide topics] but they basically had the same focus, which is pioneers. So, I tried to develop a fairly strong sense of the immigration even with the grade threes because this is the only opportunity I will have with them. . . .

> I use the curriculum guide . . . to give me ideas about objectives. And I just mix the two grades. Seeing what melds together and makes sense . . . . I just look at the two objectives and I see where they cross logically. Some of them are exactly the same, some of them go together and some of them don't fit and I don't use the ones that don't fit. I don't think it's the "what" so much as the "how." So there is no sense in adding confusion by throwing in a concept that doesn't fit into the whole. I believe that the "what" is meaningful when it comes to providing them with a scope of time. I want them to understand that this is a long time ago; that these people moved from one continent to another; that they had reasons for coming; that when they got here there were hardships. During the process, they endured these hardships but they also had some time for leisure and they also had some time for getting to know each other. (Ann, April 13 noon-hour conversation)

While Ann recognized that the formal curriculum was developed by program developers, she viewed these people as "the experts" and so did not question the perspectives inherent in the framework she was using to construct her unit. While, in many ways, Ann viewed children as world makers, she did not explicitly perceive the inconsistencies in the formal curriculum document nor in her planning of the unit. That both she and I had "a sense" of this (perhaps we "knew more than we could tell" [Polanyi] at the time) is documented in subsequent chapters, as we lived the experience of the theme and shared meanings about it in our noon-hour conversations.

For Ann, designing her theme consists of selecting the knowledge and activities through which the children will construct values, develop skills and acquire a knowledge base. Although Ann regarded the knowledge, values and skills as "givens" she did make selections based on her own perspective of what was important for the children to know. She believed that the knowledge needed to be "given" to the children (as did the formal curriculum) and that the values and skills would develop through doing the daily assignments and activities and talking about them. Ann believed strongly in the social nature of learning and the significance of talk in the construction of meaning. She said that she did not set out through "particular assignments" to teach specific skills and values but rather did this in an "indirect kind of way" through the activities she planned for the children and the talk that accompanied these and took place throughout the theme. She said, "I hope that through doing that activity and talking about it later, that they will come to these conclusions themselves, but I would never set that out in front of them" [example used was a value objective of having personal behavior reflect the values of self-reliance and cooperation]. (Joint parent presentation)

Ann did not follow a prepared unit, although there were several available from the school district and the province. Rather she selected readings, questions and activities from several. The readings and questions and some of the activities, for example the research activity, had been used two years previously, and the student materials had all been mounted on colored cardboard and laminated. In addition, Ann incorporated many ideas of her own; there was parental input (pioneer games, sachet dolls, pioneer field day); there were five field trips, two films and a guest speaker; and I had input. Ann also recognized that the children were coming with some background:

> It's a very intense unit. There is a lot of learning for the children to be done and yet the reason I think that it's so interesting is because they have had enough of it through western films and books so they have a lot of ideas to add and expand. It's not as if they are coming into it cold-turkey. (May 5 tape)

The Taught Curriculum

The taught curriculum, as distinct from the planned and the formal curriculum, was what was actually done during the theme times. Ann made this observation after the theme was completed:

> I've always found with the pioneer unit—and I don't know if it's because of my keen interest in it or whatever—they've always, every class that I've had with that theme really gets into it. We become totally immersed. So when there were deviations, I don't even remember them now. All I know is I remember not feeling hemmed it. We were, really our whole day for months, for a couple of months, was pioneers. (May 5 tape)

Because Ann used a theme approach, social studies was not conducted in "lessons" per se. In fact, when I had been in the classroom prior to Christmas break and had asked the children what they were doing in "social studies," many did not know what I meant. The children called the blocks of time "theme" whatever "subject area" was providing the focus. Ann had told me that "theme" would normally be Monday, Tuesday and Friday afternoons. The provincial social studies curriculum guide did not prescribe the amount of time per week for social studies, but did provide a guideline of 150 minutes (average time per week) for grade three and 171 minutes for grade four. Through the theme approach, Ann allocated between 300 and 345 minutes per week for the social studies theme, using Monday, Tuesday and Friday afternoons. Figure 1 shows the time actually spent on the social studies theme over the 13 weeks. Ann's statement that "our whole day for months" was pioneers, was not too much of an exaggeration. She had originally planned the time for eight to nine weeks, and in fact, it took 13 weeks. As Figure 1 indicates, many weeks "theme" time was also done on Wednesday and Thursday afternoons as well as the other three afternoons. Additional time in the mornings was used as well. Math

Figure 1

Theme Time: January 5 to April 9

Monday, Tuesday and Friday afternoons were timetabled by Ann for theme.
* Additional time
Morning recess: 10:25 to 10:40 a.m.
Afternoon recess: 2:20 to 2:35 p.m.

Week One - January 5-9	M -	1:20 - 3:15 p.m.
	T -	1:25 - 3:15 p.m.
	*W -	1:20 - 3:15 p.m.
	F -	1:20 - 3:15 p.m.
Week Two - January 12-16	M -	12:45 - 3:15 p.m.
	T -	12:40 - 3:15 p.m.
	*W -	8:45 - 2:20 (field trip)
	*F -	11:00 - 11:30 a.m. (games)
	F -	12:50 - 3:15 p.m.
Week Three - January 19-23	M -	no theme (class vote)
	T -	12:50 - 3:00 p.m.
	*W -	1:30 - 2:00 (games)
	*Th -	11:10 - 11:40 (games)
	F -	no theme (community day)
Week Four - January 26-30	M -	11:10 - 11:40 a.m. (games)
	-	1:20 - 3:00 p.m.
	T -	12:50 - 3:00 p.m.
	F -	no theme (professional day)
Week Five - February 2-6	M -	1:20 - 3:00 p.m.
	T -	12:50 - 3:00 p.m.
	*F -	10:40 - 11:40 a.m.
	-	12:50 - 3:00 p.m.
Week Six - February 9-13	M -	1:20 - 2:20 p.m.
	*T -	10:40 - 11:40 a.m.
	-	1:00 - 2:30 (Citizenship Court)
	*W -	12:40 - 3:00 p.m.
	*Th -	12:50 - 1:50 p.m.
	F -	12:50 - 2:20 p.m.
Week Seven - February 16-20	M -	12:40 - 3:35 p.m.
	T -	12:50 - 3:00 p.m.
	*Th -	12:50 - 2:10 p.m.
	F -	no theme (community day)

Week Eight - Feburary 23-27	M -	1:20 - 2:25 p.m.
	*T -	10:40 - 11:40 a.m.
	-	12:50 - 3:00 p.m.
	*W -	9:30 - 11:40 a.m.
	-	1:20 - 3:00 p.m.
	F -	no theme (teacher convention)
Week Nine - March 2-6	M -	1:20 - 3:00 p.m.
	*T -	10:40 - 11:40 a.m.
	-	12:50 - 3:00 p.m.
	F -	12:50 - 1:30 p.m.
Week Ten - March 9-13	M -	1:20 - 3:00 p.m.
	*T -	10:40 - 11:40 a.m.
	-	12:50 - 3:00 p.m.
	*W -	1:20 - 3:00 p.m.
	F -	12:50 - 3:00 p.m.
Week Eleven - March 16-20	M -	1:20 - 3:15 p.m.
	T -	12:50 - 3:00 p.m.
	*W -	9:40 - noon (field trip)
	-	1:20 - 3:00 p.m.
	F -	12:50 - 1:20 p.m.
Week Twelve - March 23-27	*M -	10:40 - 11:40 a.m.
	-	1:20 - 3:00 p.m.
	T -	1:00 - 2:00 p.m.
	*W -	1:20 - 3:00 p.m.
	*Th -	12:50 - 2:10 p.m.
	*F -	10:40 - 11:40 a.m.
	-	12:50 - 1:50 p.m.
Week Thirteen - April 6-10	*M -	10:40 - 11:40 a.m.
	-	1:20 - 3:00 p.m.
	*T -	10:40 - 11:40 a.m.
	-	12:50 - 3:00 p.m.
	*W -	10:40 - 11:40 a.m.
	-	1:20 - 3:00 p.m.
	*Th -	entire day (Pioneer Celebration)

time was rarely if ever used for theme, neither was free reading time. It was writing time that often was used to provide the additional theme time. Since the children were doing reading and writing in theme, Ann felt the flexibility was there if the children needed and wanted extra time for theme activities and projects.

In addition to large blocks of time, Ann's approach to the teaching of the social studies theme and all other areas was to have the children involved in group work. Even where an individual product was expected, the children were free to talk and share with each other. As previously stated, there were very few "social studies" lessons per se. Where a new topic and/or activity was being introduced, Ann would bring the children together and explain/model and have the children ask questions. The children would then disperse into small groups, sometimes self-selected and other times pre-selected by Ann, to work on the activities.

Providing the Knowledge Base

The Readings and Questions

One of the major ways that Ann provided the knowledge base for the children was through readings and questions. These consisted of excerpted readings, usually of approximately two pages in length, followed by four or five questions to answer. The children were all expected to do the readings and questions, which focused on information related to why settlers came to Canada and Alberta, how they got here, what they found and how they lived. There were nine of these that were mandatory and were done over a seven-week period, with three being assigned the first week of the theme. A tenth one of these was assigned where the children had to pick one out of five choices. In one of the nine mandatory activities the children read pictures for information. There was a second picture reading activity where problem-solving type questions were asked; for example, what is the problem, what are the possible solutions, what would you do? Figure 2 outlines the titles of the readings. Ann's knowledge objective for the readings and questions was "gathering information" (from the curriculum's inquiry model, Appendix III). Most of the questions, with the exception of the one problem-solving activity, were of the what, where, when, who, why variety. The readings were not intended by Ann to serve any other purpose than to be sources of answers to questions. On the day the children began these activities, Ann asked them if they knew of a good strategy for handling the materials. One child suggested that it was best to read the questions first and then go to the readings. Ann confirmed that this was an appropriate strategy. She explained to the children that they were doing these readings and questions to learn about pioneers, to learn how to handle material and to learn to work independently. Ann had a knowledge agenda, a skills agenda and a "work habits" agenda.

Although these activities were mandatory, the children were able to choose how they did them, when, where and with whom. At the beginning of each week, each child was given a planning sheet that outlined the theme activities for this week. Ann expected that these would be completed by the end of the week, barring any unforeseen circumstances. The children were aware of this requirement and so were the parents. Ann felt that it was reasonable for the week's work to be done during school time, but if a child chose to use his or her time in other ways, the assignments were to be done at home. The children could choose to work alone or with one or two others; choose to work at a desk, in the hallway, or on the floor; choose to read the excerpts together and discuss answers or sit together but do the

Figure 2

Titles of Readings

- A Group Who Came to Alberta Together
- A Ukrainian Settler
- People Without Homes
- Moving to Canada
- Arrival in Canada
- The Coming of the Settlers
- More Settlers Arrive
- Settlers Come to the Parkland
- People Come to Alberta
- The Railways
- Canada Appeals for Settlers
- A Land Ready for Settlers

work independently; choose the particular readings/questions to be done that day, based on interest and availability. The children organized all of this themselves and only sought Ann's assistance if there was problem they could not sort out. When the children were finished a reading and questions, they would check their own work on laminated answer keys and then meet with Ann, who would read and discuss their answers with them and then mark the work as Excellent, Satisfactory or Not Satisfactory. The activity was then marked as completed in her book beside each child's name.

The readings and questions were done by the children as Ann had planned but not without some unexpected outcomes. The children's experience of doing the readings/questions will be documented in a subsequent chapter. As the unit evolved, Ann's view of the reading/question activities changed as we reflected together on what we saw happening with the children as they did the activities. This was an aspect of our experience of collaboration and will be outlined in a subsequent chapter.

Field Trips and Films

Field trips and films also provided part of the knowledge base in Ann's pioneer theme. The field trips in particular played an important role in providing experiences within which the children could construct meaning about pioneer life. Six different sites were visited by the class; a reconstruction of a fur trade fort, a reconstruction of a pioneer home, a refurbished early politician's home, a reconstruction of the city's first schoolhouse, an historical costume collection and the settlement section of the provincial museum. At all of the sites, the children were exposed to historical artifacts and with the exception of the fur trade fort and the museum, the children participated in simulated activities of the times.

At the schoolhouse, the children spent an entire morning enacting a typical day at school in 1881 with a teacher "in role." She explained to the children the kind of behavior she expected; no talking, hand raising, addressing her as "ma'am" before answering and sitting up straight. Ann and I found it amazing to see these children, who were so used to freedom, choice, talk and movement, playing the role more than we were sure the children of the times would have done! The children memorized a poem with a moral, wrote on slates, did oral reading, and had health (hands) inspection. The teacher interwove all of this with tidbits of historical information about the city and community life.

This experience was a primary source of historical information for the children, as were the five other field trips where the children were exposed to many actual artifacts of the times, including, clothing, utensils, machinery, tools and other items of daily life. At the pioneer house, the children made butter, ice cream and scones, chopped wood, carded wool and made candles. At the early politician's house, needlework, baking cookies and participating as guests in the "drawing room" were the activities. The historical costume collection provided the children with an opportunity to see actual clothes of the times and to imagine what it would be like wearing items like corsets and stiff collars.

Ann showed the children two films in the course of the theme. One documented the experiences of a family through settlement on a prairie farm in the early nineteen hundreds, the First World War and the Depression. The second was about the voyageurs who carried people and supplies into Western Canada.

Guest Speakers as a Source of Information

The children had an opportunity to have access to a primary source of information when Ann arranged for a senior citizen to come to talk to the children about what her life had been like as a child in the early 1900s in Alberta. The children prepared, as a class, a set of questions to ask about daily life. The senior, who was 76, responded to these, as each child asked their question and the others recorded answers on their own individual sheets. The woman had been a teacher and had come prepared to tell the children a number of stories.

A number of parents also acted as sources of information. One mother who was an actress taught the children some games from past times and also talked with them about how to memorize and recite a poem for the recital that was to be part of the Pioneer Celebration Day. Another mother taught the children how to play some string games and marble games in preparation for the same wrap-up day. Parents and grandparents were also used as sources of information for the family tree activity.

Books, Posters, Pictures and Objects as Sources of Information

As mentioned previously, the classroom environment had been readied by Ann for the pioneer theme. The bookshelves contained many books from the school library on various aspects of pioneer times, and a parent had added books she obtained from the public library. Ann had the bulletin boards covered with pictures of early settlement times, and I added some to these. Poster replicas of advertisements made by the railways to recruit settlers to the West were put up. During the course of the theme, several children brought objects to school, including a great-grandmother's watch, old spectacles, a washboard and an old kettle.

The Activities

Recall that Ann had stated that it was through the knowledge base that the children developed skills and values as they worked with the information. She believed that through the activities and accompanying talk the children would develop the knowledge, skills and value objectives in the social studies program. Following is a descriptive summary of the major activities of the 13-week theme. Figure 3 provides a weekly summary of what was done and Figure 4 charts the writing activities through the 13 weeks.

The Theme Journal

Ann had agreed to incorporate journal writing into the theme at my request. She said that she had had the children write in journals in other themes. I was interested in the daily writing the children did in the journals as another source of insight into what meanings they may have been constructing and also as a way of getting to know all of the children as well as helping them to get to know me through my written responses.

At the end of the first day of the theme, Ann gave each of the children a new lined notebook on which she had written "Theme Journal." She explained that the children would write for 10 to 15 minutes each day about what they had learned. One or two of the children said, "What if we didn't learn anything?" Other comments included, "We didn't really learn anything new today," "I already knew what we did today," "I didn't learn anything", "I did!" Ann asked them to write about what they knew or thought about while we as teachers thought they were doing theme. One of the children said, "I thought we were doing art!" The children wrote in their books for about five minutes and then put them on Ann's desk. Initially,

Figure 3

Weekly Summary of Activities

Week 1
- "Quilting Activity"
- "What We Know" Chart
- Working Alone/Working Together Chart
- "Title Page" for binder

Week 2
- field trip - fort
- field trip - 1881 School House
- film - *Drylanders*
- games/songs (parent led)

Week 3
- Inferential Thinking
  "What Do You Think"

Week 4
- using a graph (sheet-answer questions)
- word find
- mapping - ethnic costumes
- film - *Voyageurs*
- class discussion - (What did people leave in Europe when they came to Canada?)
- quiz on countries people came from

Week 5
- vocabulary (immigrant/emigrant) (sheet-answer-question)
- picture reading - (sheet-answer questions)
- design interview for family tree
- design interview for guest speaker
- field trip - historic costumes collection
- murals/poetry - what they could show in a picture

Week 6
- interview senior citizen
- complete murals/completing Week 5 centre sheets
- citizenship court
- field trip - provincial museum
- doing family trees

Week 7
- field trip - pioneer house
- discuss field trip
- brainstorm - hardships people faced coming here
- centre sheets

Week 8
- advertising posters and questions on them
- draw poster
- write brochure

Week 9	- read out loud brochures - group research/answer questions/make models/individual reports/posters
Week 10	- last week's research, projects, reports
Week 11	- field trip - early politican's house - final written copies of individual reports
Week 12	- oral presentations on researched topics - poetry reading by L.C. (parent) - children choose poems for recital day - Easter eggs - Ukrainian design, paper place mats - design sachet dolls
Week 13	- picking master/mistress of ceremonies for recital - invitations to parents - decorate shoe boxes for box social - two parents demonstrate and help kids with string games, i.e., 'cat's cradle' - sachet dolls - pioneer day celebration - games/box social/recital/dress up

Figure 4

Writing Activities

TASK	FREQUENCY	FORMAT	AUDIENCE
Learning Journal	daily	individual	teacher
Charting	Week 1	teacher/class	class
Centre Activities	Week 1, 2, 3, 4, 5	individual/pairs	teacher
Family History Questionnaire	Week 5	class	parents
Senior Interview	Week 5	class	senior
Poetry	Week 5	group	class/other classes
Family Tree	Week 6	individual/ parents	class/parents
Questions/ Posters/ Brochures	Week 8	group	class
Research Reports/ Questions	Week 9	group/individual	class/teacher as examiner
Check List/ Criteria of an Effective Presentation	Week 11	class	class as examiner
Invitation/ Letters	Week 13	group	parents

Ann and I alternated days reading and responding to the journals. After a few weeks, I read and responded to them each day. The children's initial responses to writing in the theme journal, "I didn't learning anything" continued into the second week. When Ann and I discussed this we decided that perhaps the instruction, "write about what you learned" was causing some frustration for the children. We decided to talk to them and suggest that they write about their observations, thoughts and ideas. We also discussed the fact that fewer than half of the children were responding to our written questions and comments. Ann explained that in previous journals she had not responded to each entry and so thought that the children were not used to this type of "paper conversation." We rejected the idea of making it mandatory for the children to answer our queries or comments and adopted a "let's wait and see" attitude. During the third week, Ann decided to change the time when the children were asked to write in the theme journal from just before home time to just after the afternoon recess, telling the children that we didn't want them to be rushing to get home when writing. The journal writing did continue for the duration of the theme.

The Family Tree Activity

Ann's original plan had been to have the children design an interview sheet to find out about their family histories, and to create a family tree in the second and third weeks of the theme. Because the readings/questions activities took longer than expected, because there was no theme time on two Fridays, and because the children decided one Monday to do writing instead of theme, the family tree activity was delayed until Weeks Five and Six of the theme. During Week Five, Ann worked with the children as a class to design an interview sheet on which to collect a family history that could be used to develop an individual family tree. She began this activity by showing her own family tree, which had been done by her daughter. Ann elicited from the children the meaning of a family tree by getting them to identify its design, including the idea of roots and branches. Using the overhead transparency to record responses from the children, Ann said, "Let's think about questions you want to ask to find out about your family history." The children began by suggesting questions to do with names of the family members, dates, and places born. After about the ninth question of this type, Rachael spoke up, "If you have two dads, like if your parents are divorced, can you tell about both?" Ann responded by saying yes and writing on the transparency, "If you have step parents do questions one to nine for them." As Ann continued taking questions from the children for the family history, Brenda and Timothy were pursuing another line of inquiry:

Brenda: What if they weren't married?

Timothy: Like [ ]'s parents—they just made a baby and didn't get married.

Sara had other concerns. She said she couldn't do a family tree because she wasn't going to be able to find any information—her Dad was in Australia, and her mother wasn't in touch with her brothers and sisters. Ann handled these concerns by telling the children that what was important was to find out as much as they could. "I don't want you to feel bad about not being able to find information. Don't be upset if you don't find a lot. All I want you to do is find what you can." Ann emphasized that no matter what the family circumstances were now, each of the children did have a biological mother and father and therefore two branches in the family tree. The questions were taken home to get information that children then used to make the family tree. Ann saw the actual construction of the family tree as an excellent problem-solving activity since the children had to decide how to visually represent their information. During the next week or two, the children brought their family histories back and worked on their "trees" during theme time.

The Mural and Poetry Activity

This was the first major change to Ann's planned unit and took place during the fifth week of the theme. Adding a mural and poetry activity grew out of discussions Ann and I were having about the children's reactions to the readings/questions. This will be discussed in detail in the following chapter. The mural/poetry activity was introduced to the children by Ann's observation that she and I had noticed that in the last two weeks they weren't enjoying the centre activities. She said she thought that they had been "overburdened" by writing and now needed some time to show their ideas. Ann talked about using Friday to do this in mural/poetry form. She asked the children what they could show in a picture, and the following was recorded on the blackboard: 1881 Schoolhouse; clothing; travel; how people got to Alberta; what pioneers saw then they got here; shelter and voyageurs. Ann commented to me that it was interesting to her that their ideas were a reflection of films, field trips and what they had "done" and that she thought a pattern was emerging.

Friday from 10:40 a.m. until the end of the day was devoted to theme, which was the mural and poetry activity. When I arrived, the following instructions were on the blackboard:

> You will divide into your pioneer poetry and mural groups.
>
> 1. Brainstorm words and phrases to describe or identify your topic (10 minutes).

2. Write a poem together (30 minutes) rough draft.
3. Plan mural - use classroom books to look for pictures of things or scenes that will help you draw your mural.

Note: We will use white mural paper, pencils and felts for color.

This afternoon:

1. One person will do good copy of poem on chart paper--join artists when finished.
2. The rest will work on mural.

The children were in six groups representing the six topics suggested on Tuesday. The groups had been chosen by lot. Ann went through examples of how to do the brainstorm activity and how they might proceed with the poetry and then the children went to work. The finished poems and murals were displayed in the hallway.

The Advertising Posters and Brochures Activity

This was the major activity of Week Eight. It had originally been planned for Week Four of the theme, and was intended to focus on the advertising the CPR and Canadian government did to attract settlers to Western Canada. This was again a group project. Ann had divided the children into four groups by "splitting up the boys, (recall there were only five in the classroom), splitting up the too-chummy girls, and mixing grade threes and grade fours." Ann had four large posters up around the room, which were replicas of original posters advertising Canada as a "land of milk and honey." In their groups, the children were to examine the poster they had been assigned and answer a question sheet. They were then to read two excerpts about settlers coming to the Canadian West. With this background information, each group was to design its own poster and brochure as though they were the CPR and the Canadian government luring settlers to the West. This activity used all the available theme time for that week. On Monday of the following week, the posters were hung up in the classroom and the brochures were read out loud by the children.

The Group Research Project

Ann had originally planned this project for Weeks Five, Six and Seven of the theme. During Week Eight, Ann did some preparation for this project by asking the children to indicate their choice of topics for further research into pioneer life. Each child was given a sheet of paper with the choices; traditions and transportation, food, shelter, clothing and breaking land. Each was asked to indicate a first, second and third choice for research. The following week, the research project began with Ann gathering the children together on the rug to discuss the activity and what was expected. Each group received a packet of materials, including activity cards and information sheets. The children were asked to answer the questions accompanying the readings and then to choose activities such as making models. Each individual child had to write a report on some aspect of the group topic. Weeks Nine, Ten and Eleven were spent on this activity.

The five groups of children took their packets of material and began the project. The readings and questions on a particular topic were divided up among the children in the group so that each child or pair of children only did one. This took only the first or second day, then the children began the activity portion, which involved making charts, posters, and/or models about the topic to be used as "visuals" for the group presentation. The food group prepared dried apples, cookies, and "hasty pudding." These constructing activities took most of the time. After the groups had prepared their "visuals," individuals began to work on their written reports. The visuals were all displayed in the classroom, and on the Monday of Week Twelve, as part of their group, each child presented his or her report to the class.

The Pioneer Celebration Day

This had originally been planned as the culmination of the eight-week theme. Preparation for it took place during Weeks Twelve and Thirteen, with the actual day being April 9th. During Week Twelve, one of the parents, who was an actress and singer, spent an afternoon with the children, delighting them by reading some poetry, telling a story and showing the children a way to memorize poetry. The children were then to choose a poem to prepare for the recital that was to be part of the Pioneer Celebration Day. Those who wished could memorize their poem, others were free to prepare theirs as a reading. The children began making sachet dolls this week as well. These were copied from a pattern sent by one of the children's great-grandmothers. Ann told the children that making them was an activity pioneers would have done and that the dolls would be used for the school tea, a classroom open house and as a gift for Mother's Day.

After the Spring Break week, the children returned to school to make final preparations for Thursday's Pioneer Celebration Day. They designed invitations to their parents, chose a master of ceremonies for the afternoon recital, decorated shoe boxes for the box lunch social, were taught some pioneer games—tops, hopscotch, and string games—and readied the classroom for the event. The classroom was covered entirely with the children's work from the theme, family tree charts, advertising posters and brochures, murals, charts, displays and reports from the group presentations. Ann commented to me that through the course of the unit, the classroom had gone from teacher posters and pictures to children's drawings, writings and displays. Sheets were pinned across one part of the classroom to make curtains for the "stage" where the recital would take place. In addition to the invitations, Ann had the children take home to their parents a note with suggestions on types of clothing pioneer children may have worn and possible items to include in the box lunch to make it as authentic as possible. On Wednesday afternoon the children did a practice of their presentations for the recital. On Thursday, the morning was organized by parents and involved the children in games such as skipping, tops, marbles and hopscotch. There was also a lemon race, where the children were in teams and in relay style had to run with a lemon between their knees and drop it in a jar. There was a "pass the message" game, where the message was whispered from child to child. The box lunch social was the noon activity, followed by the recital. The children all had some form of costume, as did Ann and I. Several parents participated in the morning activities and many attended the afternoon recital. The children wrote in their theme journals at the end of the day, and that completed the taught social studies theme.

The Children's Constructions of Previous Experiences

One of the contexts for all of the children was that of the wider experienced world, that is their past and ongoing experiences and constructs, in school and out of school. In my first interview with each child, I asked what he/she knew about pioneers prior to the theme, including school experiences and family experiences. The parents were also interviewed and asked to talk about experiences they thought might have given the children background about pioneers.

Adam

When I asked Adam what he knew about pioneers before beginning the theme he said, "I didn't really know anything about pioneers before, except that they wore ragged old clothing. I thought they wore, that all pioneers wore ragged old clothes." Adam speculated that he thought this, "I guess from books that had people with ragged old clothes and stuff and also I think I just thought it. I can't really understand why I thought that, but I just thought it." In terms of school work done in previous years Adam was definite that he had not learned anything to do with pioneers, "No, because we weren't studying all that much on pioneers. It was, when I was in Grade Two, it was mostly other things like dinosaurs and stuff." I asked him about family outings:

R: Have you ever been to the historic fort before?

A: Yeah, millions of times.

R: Have you been any other places like that with your Mom?

A: . . . Ukrainian village. It's kind of a real old village. There's all kinds of things like grain elevators and stuff and people that live in the houses that are there and there's a telegraph sender when we went there. (March 13 tape)

Adam lived with his mother and his maternal grandparents. His mother was aware of the theme the children were involved in as a result of communications from Ann and the field trip coordinator, as well as from discussions with Adam. Adam had talked to his mother about the film, *The Drylanders*, mentioning that the film was about the Great Depression, which Ann explained came after the early pioneers settled. The film depicted early settlement through to the Depression, and Ann had told the children that they would find all of the film interesting, but that the sections on the Depression and the War were not part of what they were studying in this theme.. Adam's mother explained to me that she had pointed out to him that his grandfather had "ridden the rails" during the Depression and suggested that Adam ask him about it. She commented that Adam's response to this had been that since this wasn't part of the time period Ann had specifically said they were studying, there was no point in talking to his grandfather. Adam's mother said:

> He had a very definite idea on what kind of information he was looking for and I guess he took very seriously the thing that Ann had said to them, that this wasn't, the Great Depression wasn't in the time period that they were studying, but he did talk to his Grandfather about it. (March 5 tape)

She went on to add that they had also talked about her grandparents, Adam's great-grandparents, who had been pioneers to Canada from England and Iceland and again, Adam had dismissed this as relevant because they weren't pioneers to Alberta. "So I was trying to point out to him, just trying to talk to him about the idea of people who are pioneers . . . to Canada. And so, I think he likes to keep his facts all very much categorized." (March 5 tape)

In addition to daily access to grandparents, Adam's mother said they had been to a local historic site many times as her sister had a booth at the Farmer's Market there and that they had visited other historic sites, which was an interest of hers. She read to Adam, including books about the past, and related that Adam had been very excited about getting some new pants, "they were old fashioned pants with buttons and leather tabs and braces," because he knew that for the culmination of the unit they would be dressing up in clothes that pioneers might have worn, "he wasn't thrilled because they were new pants, he was thrilled because they are pioneer pants." (March 5 tape)

Brenda

When I asked Brenda what she may have known about pioneers prior to the theme, she immediately mentioned things she had learned from the previous year's theme on the Depression. "Well, I think that their clothing was the same as in the Depression cause that was just after, except that they wouldn't have to have their life like that." Brenda said she knew something from the study of the Depression about "their clothing and some of their food." She volunteered the following information:

B: And in the Depression the children used to play with those kinds of things, I did children in the Depression.

R: That's what you did your report on?

B: Oh ya. And they used to play with . . . they didn't have rubber but they played with deer skin balls and the other things they played . . . fox and goose . . . . They used to play with their mums and dads, when their dads were out during the Depression or whatever. And they used to eat, . . . well it was something that Ann used to eat when she was young that was really yucky. It was like tuna and banana or something really gross all mixed up in a sandwich. (February 9 tape)

Brenda remembered going to local historical sites with her family and seeing a "sugaring off." Her words were, "I've gone there when they had a syrup thing." She also talked about seeing old hatchets and knives and having a hayride. She said she was bringing some things from home that had to do with pioneer times and that she had seen things on television about pioneers.

Brenda lived in a two parent family and was the eldest of three children. Like Adam, her mother was aware of the theme being studied in school and had talked with Brenda about aspects of it, including family information required for the family tree. Brenda's mother indicated her own interest in the family tree and said she had quite a bit of information for Brenda, including a baby book of her husband's, which included his family tree. Brenda had been allowed to bring this to school. Her mother indicated that Brenda usually talked with them about projects related to the pioneer theme, particularly about the field trips. She apparently had been very proud of the candle and pillow she had made at one of the historic sites.

Brenda's mother felt that Brenda knew a lot about surviving because the family had some land outside of the city where they had gone from living in a tent, to a teepee, to a one-room building without running water and electricity. They cooked on an open fire or a wooden stove; relating living this way to living in the past was described by Brenda's mother as "just part of the conversation." As a family, they also visited historical sites, usually once a year or so. Brenda's mother also volunteered information about her own interest in quilting, which she said she had done quite a bit of, and felt that Brenda would know something about this aspect of pioneer life. She also suggested that Brenda would have background information about pioneer times from the theme that she had done ~~in~~ school last year, on the Depression. At this time, Brenda had interviewed her maternal grandmother who lived in the city and her paternal grandparents.

Timothy

Timothy, like Brenda, immediately began to talk about last year's theme on the Depression in response to my question about previous knowledge.

> T: Well in the Depression some of that, like some Depression books that I've read . . . it would start in the pioneer days and then go up to the First World War and then the Depression and then the Second World War, so I learned some from that. And sometimes on TV they have, . . . they usually tell . . . how people got there and stuff. (February 10 tape)

Timothy wasn't sure if he had been to any historical sites with his family, but recalled that he had been to several local historic sites on more than one occasion, through his four years of school.

Timothy was the youngest of five children and his father too was aware that the children were doing a pioneer theme. Timothy's father, like Brenda' mother, felt that part of the family lifestyle might provide background related to history and the pioneers of Alberta. He said that the family did a lot of camping in more remote areas and had stumbled on old gold mines and artifacts in northern British Columbia. Timothy's father said the children were encouraged to do "hands on" things like build forts, camp and cook over a fire. He said that Timothy had interviewed his grandparents and that he read a lot of books about the north and cowboys. Family trips to local historical sites and museums had been made throughout the years.

Timothy's father explained that when Timothy talked about what was being done in school related to the pioneer theme it was usually triggered by some other experience or event. He gave the example of seeing some Hutterites in a nearby small town, which had prompted Timothy to remark that they still dressed like the pioneers, with aprons over top of their skirts. Like the other two families, Timothy's family seemed to do a lot of talking about what was going on around them. Timothy was described by his father as having the desire to please others.

Penney

Penney's response to what she knew about pioneers prior to the theme was "Mmmm . . . I don't know." She did discuss with me that her grandmother was writing a book about her pioneer history and Penney also shared with me a community history book containing her mother's family. She also volunteered information about her dad's parents coming to Western Canada as pioneers. She had been to local historic sites and said she had read some books on some of the forts that had been in the local area.

Penney was the eldest child of two children. Her mother knew about the study of the pioneer theme through communications sent home and the interest Penney had been expressing at home in pioneer times. Penney's mother indicated that Penney had been talking to her grandmother about growing up in pioneer times and that the grandmother was actually writing an autobiography of her experiences as a little girl growing up on a farm on the prairies. Penney's mom expressed the belief that although her mother wasn't an early pioneer, that "she pioneered in her own way." Penney's grandmother had encouraged Penney to bring a local community history book to school, which was about the area where she had grown up and contained written and pictorial information about Penney's relatives. Penney had also been seeking library books about pioneers on family trips to the public library.

Penney's mother felt that Penney had expressed a lot of interest in and had talked a lot at home about this theme, in comparison to the previous theme related to Alberta's geography. When I asked if she could think of any particular reasons this theme would be of such interest to Penney, her mother thought that it could be "because I'm interested in it as well and I collect a lot of old photographs and I've been giving her some encouragement in this study." She explained that she had photo albums of the early days of her family, including pictures of her grandmother standing in front of a log cabin. She also collected antiques and had her grandmother's hand tatted wedding dress hanging in the studio where she worked as an artist. Visiting a local historic site had been done in the past, but wasn't something the family did on a regular basis. Like the other children, Penney's family talked with her a lot. Her mother mentioned that just the night before they had been talking about a local replica of an early fur trading fort and the relationship between the Indians and white men. She also mentioned that Penney had asked if she could take her great-grandmother's locket watch to school to show the other children. Penney's mother said that Penney "loved" the field trips being taken throughout the pioneer theme.

The children's initial responses to the questions about what they already knew about pioneers, and experiences they may have had that would have given them information about pioneers and pioneer times were not as rich and detailed as the responses of the parents. The two older children who had studied the Depression the year before both made statements about that providing them with some information. They both linked the time periods and understood that settlement times were prior to the Depression Years. None of the children mentioned the variety of homelife experiences such as living like pioneers (camping, homesteading), home collections of photographs and antiques, access to grandparents.

Polanyi has made a distinction between tacit and explicit knowledge. For Kelly, experience is not merely the succession of events themselves, but rather the "making something out of them" through the discovery of replicative themes. It is possible that the children know more than they can tell and their lived experience of history and their school experience of history are two separate realities and they make something of them in different ways. In the wider world of experience, the children probably don't construe those experiences as "historical experiences." But those experiences do have "meaning potential" as history even though they would need to be reconstrued through the lens of history. So they do know more than they can tell. The children's experience of history, of pioneer times, outside of school, was as construed by their parents, from an adult perspective. This tells us a lot about the parents' constructions about pioneer times and history. The degree to which the children construed the same experiences as having to do with pioneers or history varies. Of the four children, Penney was probably the one who most construed the outside school experiences as described by her mother as connected with pioneers and history. I was not able to discern this from my interviews or observations and conversations with her, but from her mother's comments. Penney was obviously connecting her school experiences of pioneers and history to out of school experiences; for example, initiating conversations with her grandmother about pioneer times, independently choosing library books about pioneer times, and asking to bring the antique locket watch to school. Although Adam's mother was deliberately pointing out to Adam connections between his wider world experience and his school experience of pioneers and history, Adam took literally his perceptions of the teacher's authority over what had to do with pioneers and what didn't. Brenda had a connection to her wider world experience when she said that the quilting project was one of her two favorite activities in the theme and that this was because she had forgotten about her mom knowing so much about quilting and now she had learned about it. Timothy's father suggested that Timothy often made connections with his school experience and his wider experience through the use of simile: the Hutterites still dress like pioneers.

> He doesn't talk overly a lot [about what he has learned in school]. What he'll do is all of a sudden he'll just come along and talk about it . . . and he won't say, "We went on a field trip," it's usually something triggers it. It could be a picture . . . we don't watch that much television, we have a television, but periodically we'll watch and

> Tim will say, "Well that's just like" . . . and then he'll relate it back to it. (April 13 tape)

The social studies theme was providing a forum in which the children could renegotiate their meanings about pioneers and history. Not only were previous constructions influencing how the children construed their new experiences, but new constructions were enabling them to renegotiate past experiences. What may previously have been family outings and experiences and taken for granted family photos, books and objects may now have been looked upon through constructions about pioneers and history. Making something out of our experiences is always a reflective activity.

CHAPTER VI

THE CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCE OF THE THEME: CONSTRUCTING INDIVIDUAL REALITIES AND NEGOTIATING MEANING DURING THE PIONEER THEME

Introduction

Throughout the 13-week theme, each child in Ann's classroom constructed individual realities in transaction with a variety of contexts, using a variety of symbol systems to both create and convey meaning. There was not one reality of the theme, but multiple realities. The children constructed personal realities and negotiated meanings across multiple contexts. The purpose of this chapter is to provide some images of the realities four children in Ann's classroom were construing and the meanings they were negotiating.

As outlined in the previous chapter, Ann had designed the theme to expose the children to certain knowledge and to involve them in a variety of activities related to Alberta's pioneers. Using examples from the children's writing, peer conversations and conversations with me, I will try to convey some of the realities the children were constructing and the meanings they were negotiating.

Reading and Answering the Questions

Following is an example of one of the readings, the questions asked, the answers available on the answer key and the actual answers of the four children.

The Reading: *A Ukrainian Settler Who Came to Alberta*

> We know Martin Finseth came to Alberta to get free farm land. Now let's find out why people came thousands of kilometres from Europe. Mykhailo Stetsko lived in the Ukraine in Europe. In a book named *Greater Than Kings*, he tells why he came to Alberta. Read the part of the book below to find out why he came.

My father didn't own any land. He farmed land for another man. When I grew up, I farmed for that man too. My wife and I had 3 children. But my pay was very poor. It was only enough for me and my wife to live on. There was little money to get food and clothing. Our garden was too small to feed all of us very well.

I began worrying about my children's future. I didn't want them to be as poor as I was. I worried about how I would feed more children when they were born. I worried about what would happen if I got sick. Then I couldn't work for the farm owner.

I told my wife I was thinking of going to Canada. I knew other Ukrainians had gone to Canada. They had free land. They had their own farms. I went to my master one Sunday in 1906. I took off my hat and bowed low. I kissed his hand. That was what we did when we went to see the landowner.

I asked if I could borrow $40 to go to Canada. I told him I would pay him back. If I got sick, my children would pay him back. I put an X on a paper because I couldn't write my name. The paper showed I had borrowed $40.

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The Questions and Answers on Key

1. What work did Mykhailo's father do? Mykhailo's father farmed land for another man.

2. What work did Mykhailo do? Mykhailo farmed land for another man.

3. What work do you think Mykhailo's children would do if they stayed in the Ukraine? Mykhailo's children probably would of farmed land for another man.

4. Why do you think it was so important to Mykhailo to come to Alberta? It was important for Mykhailo to come to Alberta because he could get free land.

[Note: This excerpt and questions were from a provincially prepared unit.]

Timothy's Written Responses

1. he worked at somebody elses farm.
2. he also worked for somebody elses farm.
3. they would work for somebody elses farm as well.
4. because he could get free farm land and not half to farm for somebody else and get enough money for food and egication for his children.

Brenda's Written Responses

1. Mykhailo's father was a farmer for rich man brown.
2. Mykhailo also worked for rich man brow but when he was older.
3. Mykhailo's pay was poor, their was only enough money for him and his wife to live on, there was little money for food, and the children anyway the children would have been (if they stayed in ukrane) a farmer the same as their father and their fathers father.
4. Top of nuber 3.

Adam's Written Response

1. cop wood
2. take out the wedds he farmed land for a man and macalo did to
2. set the beds. tidy the cotig
3. work for the rich man the grils wod mary pesnts
4. Macalo wntid to come to albrta for the free land so he code feed and educate his cildrn

[Note: on the top of the question sheet there was a picture of a man and woman digging earth in a fenced area. In the background was a thatched-roofed cottage.]

Penney's Written Responses

1. Makalos Father farmed land for a nother man.
2. He worked for a Farm Owner.
3. Makalos children Farmed [it looked like Ann had written, "For whom?" and Penney had added the following] for a nother man to I guess.
4. it was important for Makalo to go to Alberta because they hade free land and there own farms.

Timothy and Adam both wrote entries in their theme journals about this reading. I believe that Penney had a reference to it as well, although her statement isn't explicit. There was no reference to the reading in Brenda's journal.

Penny's Journal Entry

> in theme I learned pioneer familys usualy do the same job. I also learned that Travel is fast for some people and is slow for outhers. [second sentence is a reference to another reading]

Timothy's Journal Entry

> that mykhailos father worked for somebodys elses farm and when mykhailo grou up he worked for the same farm and when his kids grew up they would work at the same place and so mykhailo did not have enough food to feed her family course the food that ~~she~~ he planted for ~~his~~ the person that he worked for he had to give to him and he only had a little garden in the back yard to feed off so he moved to alberta and got free farm land and enough money to support his kids and ~~he~~ his kids got better edgecation

Adam's Journal Entry

> I LRND THAT PEASANTS WENT DAWN iN GENARASHNS ANS SO DID THE ricH PEOPL.

As the children began completing the answers to the questions on the excerpts and consulting the answer keys, they pointed out to Ann that some of their answers to the questions were different and asked which were the right answers. The example above of the excerpt, questions and answers and individual children's answers is illustrative of what was occurring. Ann called the children together and acknowledged that their answers were often more complete and better than those on the key and encouraged them to continue writing the answers they thought were best. The keyed answers to the questions were very literal, while many of the children were writing more interpretive answers. A good example of this is found in the answers that Timothy and Adam gave to the fourth question about why it was important for Mykhailo to come to Alberta. Both picked up on the fact that not only was Mykhailo concerned about his immediate life, but he was worried about the future of his children. Although the idea that the future of his children would be better if they could be educated is not contained within the excerpt, both children extrapolated from the passage that education would mean a better future for Mykhailo's children.

Adam's responses to the questions are interesting. Whether these were completed at school or at home is not certain. He had obviously taken some clues from the picture above the questions on the card. In answer to the question about what Mykhailo's father did he wrote "chopped wood." He had then written a "2" to indicate that this was the answer to question 2 which was asking about the work that Mykhailo did. Here he wrote "take out the wedds" which is what the male figure in the picture could have been doing. This was followed by, "He farmed land for a man and Macalo did to," which was a combined answer to questions 1 and 2. Adam had then written another "2" and beside this was "set the beds. Tidy the cotig." In the picture, there was a woman beside the man, also digging or hoeing. Behind them was a cottage. We can only speculate that Adam decided to tell about the work done by Mykhailo's wife or daughters. This would have been accurate for the times described by the excerpt, although there is no reference to anything of that nature in the excerpt. Adam's response to the third question about the fate of Mykhailo's children if they were to stay in the Ukraine is also fascinating. He makes the general statement that they would have to work for the rich man and then adds, "the grils wod mary pesnts." Again the statement is accurate, including the use of the word "peasants", although the excerpt does not contain that word.

Adam has also juxtaposed the social and economic status of Mykhailo and the landowner by saying that the children would work for the rich man and any girls would marry into their same class, that is peasants. Adam has tremendous understanding of the social and economic conditions in Europe that led many people to emigrate to Canada in the late 1800s and early 1900s. His journal entry, done at school, clearly indicates the depth of the meanings he has constructed, "I lrnd that peasants went dawn in genarashns and so did the rich peopl." This is a powerful generalization.

Brenda's responses to this excerpt are interesting as well. She too, sees that the landowner is rich in comparison to Mykhailo and has given him a name, "rich man brown." She also has a sense of the class system in Europe when she writes, "anyway the children would have been (if they stayed in ukrane) a farmer the same as their father and their fathers father."

Penney's responses are the most literal of the four children and reflect exact wording from the excerpt.

This example of the children's responses to the same reading and questions is illustrative of what Eisner calls student-specific outcomes.

> The way a student personalizes meanings—the ideas he creates that are spin-offs from the content of the course or from the musings of the teacher—is also important. Indeed, in the long run they might be among the most important contributions of schooling. (1985, p. 81)

Eisner suggests that we have ignored this dimension of learning in our educational evaluation and in educational research.

The children constructed unique meanings from the common readings and questions. A further example of this can be seen in the answers the children wrote to a question based on this passage from an excerpt about the coming of the settlers to Western Canada.

> Palliser recommended settlement along the North Saskatchewan River valley where rainfall and soil were good. Acting on this and other reports, Canada bought the western lands from the Hudson's Bay Company in 1870. The Hudson's Bay Company was given 300,000 [pounds sterling] to give up their fur interests.
>
> The government then began to prepare the west for settlement. Treaties were signed with the Indian tribes. The North-West Mounted Police Force was sent west to keep law and order. Surveyors were sent out to mark off millions of farm lots. And the Canadian Pacific Railway was built to bring the immigrants and their belongings to western Canada. (*Albertans All*, p. 49)

The question was, "When the settlers came, how did the Indians have to adjust their lifestyles? The Hudson Bay Company? The settlers themselves?" Despite the unclear nature of the question, the children wrote some remarkable answers. The answer key said, "answers will vary."

> **Brenda**
>
> Treates were sighted by the indians and the government. "Canada bought the western lands from the hudsons bay company." For the settlers there lifestyle changed because they had there own land.
>
> **Timothy**
>
> the indians were used to roming around but now the canadians moved them into one little corner where it was bad land and no bufaloe
>
> So when they gave them $300 000 dollars to give up there fur company they turned it into a department store
>
> When they got to Canada they had small house or they made them out of dirt sticks logs hay and straw and they farmed.
>
> **Penney**
>
> When the settlers came the indians had to adjust to a smaller lifestyle because they were forced to sine the treaties
>
> the Hodsons bay company changed there line of buisness from selling furs to pioneer goods

the settlers had to adjust to a lonelyer lifestyle

Adam

THE INDINS SIND TRETEAS THAT THAY CODNT MOVE ON.

THE HOTSNS BAY COMANY WAS PAYD 300,000 TO GIV UP THAr FUr INIESTS.

SETLrS BCAM raNCH HANDS

These responses from the children again illustrate the unique meaning that the children were constructing. It is obvious that they are all drawing on previous knowledge as well as information in the passage when they construct their responses. This is particularly clear in the responses of Adam, Penney and Timothy to the adjustments to the Indian way of life. All three suggest a sense of the effect the signing of the treaties had on the Indian people. Adam says "thay codnt move on" and Timothy says, "the indians were used to roming around but now the canadians moved them into one little corner" and Penney evokes a powerful image when she says, "the indians had to adjust to a smaller lifestyle." The responses all suggest a sense of injustice; Timothy is very explicit, "it was bad land and no bufaloe." These children are all negotiating meaning with this excerpt; each creating a text rooted in the individual's social being and culture. This is evident also in Penney and Timothy's responses regarding the Hudson's Bay Company. Penney says they "changed there line of buisness from selling furs to pioneer goods" and Timothy says, "they turned it into a department store." Since the passage contains no information from which these ideas could even be extrapolated, it is clear that the children are creating this meaning in transaction with the unique contexts of which each has been a part.

In Brenda's response, it is interesting to note a construction she brings to the passage about copying directly from a source. Note that she has put quotation marks around the sentence which she copied directly from the excerpt.

The Beginnings of Doubt About the Readings/Questions

The beginnings of doubt about the readings/questions began during the first week of the theme. The second day, as the children began to complete some of the questions and compare their answers with those on the key, they began to point out to Ann that some of their answers were different. "Our answers are different. Which one is right?" Ann discovered that many of the children's answers were in fact better than those on the key; they were more complex and abstract in their depth of insight. She acknowledged this to the children and praised the insightful answers they were suggesting.

In my Week Two field notes I categorized the types of questions the children who worked with me had about the readings/questions. This seemed to be what the children were experiencing:

1. not understanding the question—e.g., specific vocabulary or use of words such as "would-be" settlers
2. having to use information from last week's cards—e.g., how were Nicolas and Mary's reasons for coming to Canada the same as Mykhailo's or Martin Finseth's (both in the first week's readings)
3. finding the answer in the printed material—e.g., what group of Americans came; where from, where did they settle? I found this one difficult too because there was a lot of information to read and many possible answers.
4. answers on the "key" not matching what the children had written—often their answers were not wrong, just different, e.g., in response to the question, "what was important to both Nicolas and Mykhailo?", two of the boys answers, "A future for their families." The answer key said, "A water supply for the land."

In the field notes, I asked Ann if these were the same kind of questions she was getting from the children who came to her. Her written response beside number 1 above, where she had underlined "the question—e.g., specific vocabulary" was:

> Yes! My fault, I feel. These questions were originally from a manual. I need to rewrite them.

The written responses to number 3:

> I tried to show children how to skip read for this card—read questions and then skim to find possible answers—that worked better than reading entire handout for all details.

Ann's written comment by number 4:

> The students in this group are not as literal as the grp 2 years ago. They step beyond the obvious much more often. They're better at reading "between the lines" than any group I've ever had previously.

The Beginnings of the Question, "What does it mean to teach and learn?"

During our Week Three noon-hour conversation, Ann expanded on her written comments:

> Yes. When I saw the questions that I had those kids answering, I felt terrible. Those questions are taken [from] somebody's else's manual —three years ago. As far as I'm concerned, I need to rewrite the unit again.
>
> But what a good lesson for a teacher—that you cannot pull out a lesson that you did three years ago and use it [with] another group of children because they approach problems differently. This is the first time in my life that I have done that. Because two years ago I had [teacher aide] . . . so [she] was there to make all these wonderful boxes of audiovisual [material] and I'd never had the opportunity before. And she said, "Ann, why don't I just laminate all this for you and you can just pull it out two years from now and do your [theme]." "Okay." So she did. I have three boxes on "Landscapes" [grade four unit]. I have two boxes of everything prepared for pioneers. But you know, I don't think I'll ever do that again. It was a waste. (January 20 tape)

Ann's comments led me to wonder how children in other classes coped with this type of activity. These children could talk to each other and had Ann and I there to assist. I wondered out loud,

> If you gave these questions and told them to sit at their desks by themselves, read the stuff and answer them, how many would they get wrong, not because they didn't read, didn't pay attention, or because they are stupid kids. but just because of things like this [that is the problems we had noted the children experiencing]. (January 20 tape)

Ann felt that perhaps a class chart needed to be made at this point to pull together what the children were learning.

A Sharing of Human Cognition Leads to Action

During our Week Five noon-hour conversation, one of the things I wanted to discuss with Ann was how she construed the oral and written remarks of some of the children over the last two weeks. These included remarks like, "These sheets are boring," "I hate theme," and "This is boring." These responses seemed to be directed to the readings/questions. Theme journal responses to films and field trips had been lengthy and full of detail and I hadn't heard any "borings" related to them. I wondered what significance Ann saw in the remarks.

> A: I don't know. I think that [the] saturation point has pretty well been reached by many on gathering information. I think it's been spread out too long. I think that's my fault.
>
> I haven't gone into the juice of the topic fast enough. I think it's a mistake I made . . . once we define some of the hardships which they are looking at this week, I don't want them to think it's all a bed of roses, then we can get into the advertising part and hopefully that will lighten things up. But I think that's what it is . . . I've noticed that whenever I'm continually shoving material at kids, at kids, they eventually . . . the first week or so they don't mind, but past two weeks it begins to get more and more draggy for more and more people. (February 3 tape)

We discussed the fact that during the first two weeks, many children had even asked to stay in at recess and work on the readings/questions. I kept thinking about how we often dismiss what the children are expressing and mentioned to Ann that now I was beginning to think "that there is always something behind it." She agreed, saying that this group of children was a "trooper group" and "when they start to say those kinds of things, I know that the design is wrong. I really do."

One of the first days of theme in early January, Ann had commented about not really being too happy with the readings/questions but that they did serve certain purposes. I asked her to tell me more about what she saw as the value in these activities. She described her major objectives as being "to develop an independent study habit," which Ann referred to as the "hidden curriculum," including being accountable for time and the quality of the product. In terms of the theme itself, Ann saw these activities as providing the children with the opportunity to gather information on pioneer times. Ann felt telling the information to the children would take less time, but that it was important for them to work on the information themselves in groups where they could "actively discuss" what the answers might be.

Ann expressed that the time was "getting draggy" and that it was apparent a change was needed.

A: I'm going to have a little class discussion . . . see how they feel if I put them into groups, say on Friday or something, and we spent a day putting whatever they learned in mural form . . . would it be worthwhile?

R: That would be neat.

A: No, do you want to do that? I'd like to see what I could get out of them. (February 3 tape)

I told Ann that I thought it would be fascinating now to have the children do a mural. A decision had been made by us to take action on the problems we had perceived.

The Question of What it Means to Teach and Learn is Articulated

Although a decision had been made on what action we were going to take as a result of the problems the children were having, and the frustration and boredom they were expressing, Ann was still pondering the entire matter of what was occurring with the children and the readings/questions. She said she didn't "feel good" about what was happening in theme. I asked if she wanted to say more about that:

> I feel it dragging. I feel the kids dragging and I don't like that feeling. I like them to be hyped up and excited and I just feel that they've been doing too much written work and that it's time for them to do something else. (February 3 tape)

Although Ann wanted the children to create something, she was concerned that they still might not have enough "background" information on the hardships that the pioneers faced when they arrived in Alberta. I suggested that by the time they had finished the day's activities, the children would have read a considerable amount of information and asked Ann what she thought about this.

> A: Yes. Well, I hope so because it is just about time to solidify that and get them feeling like they are actively involved in it. (February 3 tape)

Ann again expressed that she had "learned a lesson" from this in terms of using material developed two years ago for another class. She also talked about the seductiveness of "shiny laminated and beautifully bound" materials that had taken "hours of work" and that she felt "obliged" to use because "everything was done."

> A: I won't do it again ever.

R: Yes. You've said that before. What would you do differently if you hadn't used that? Of course, it's hard to know now because you would have thought it through.

A: Yes. Well, I would make sure that there was a, either a three-dimensional figure to make or mural work to do or painting or whatever. I would put in more poetry, more of the creating of poetry because I think that that makes children focus very quickly on a central idea. I would shorten the gathering of information; oh, there are just a lot of things I would do. (February 3 tape)

As we talked, we identified two major problems that we thought could account for the response of the children to the readings/questions. One had to do with time; this introductory "gathering information" section was now into its fifth week. A few children had begun expressing boredom with the question/answer activities in the second week. A second concern we kept coming back to was the nature of the materials and activities themselves, a feeling that the "prepackaged" materials weren't actively involving the children. As we pursued this latter idea in more depth, I realized we were raising a critical question about predetermined programs and their "fit" with the constructivist stance—what does it mean to teach and learn? Are we world makers or world receivers?

Ann's language arts program was based on literature and on writing. There were no textbooks, workbooks, or question and answer sheets. The children were actively involved in creating meaning about reading and writing from reading and writing. But what about the content area of social studies? The materials that Ann was using, the laminated information sheets and accompanying questions, she had selected from a provincial department of education teaching unit, as well as from a publisher's kit on western settlement and from some teaching materials that accompanied a set of books designed for elementary children on pioneer Alberta.

She was not using any one unit in its totality, and in fact had done a tremendous amount of selection from a variety of sources in an attempt to meet the needs of the students and to meet her objectives for the unit. We discussed this, wondering if this approach was not working, what was it like for the children when a teacher used someone else's unit in total, simply following the activities, questions and sequence suggested. I raised my feeling again that sometimes we ignore the messages children are giving us and do not think to question the taken-for-granted "rightness" of the program and questions. Ann's next comment made explicit the notion that not only do children need to be world makers but so do teachers.

> A: Yes, but part of the reason that I'm coming to think like this is because I feel it myself. Last week I couldn't remember one timetable from the next and I'm feeling, at the end of the day—and this isn't normally me—the end of the day I just want to go home. I just want to get out of here and go home. So what that tells me is that I'm not being an active learner. And so then I have to say, "Well, why aren't I being an active learner?" And the answer is, "I am bored to tears with this unit." And it's because I pulled out this lovely, lovely package and said, "Here, this is what we're going to learn." And I haven't been active in that. I mean this is two years ago. This isn't the here and now. So I've killed myself and my students because of this lesson. I just want to take this whole unit and dump it in the garbage. I'm not going to because at this point I have to think about what I'm going to do when this unit is finished. In fact, that's were my creative mind is working right now —what I'm doing next. And I'm not pulling out anything. I think I'm going to go into my classroom and dump everything that's there. Maybe not the things that I call resource materials, but the questions and all that sort of stuff. Just get rid of it because it is really, it is binding. (February 3 tape)

The collaborative relationship made it possible for Ann and me to construct and confront the question of what it means to teach and learn. As we talked about the problems we saw the children having with the readings and questions, the oral and written messages we were getting from them about their perceptions of the activity, and our own feelings about the materials and activities, the question emerged as a tension between the curriculum materials and the lived experience of the children and Ann and me as we used them. The collaborative relationship gave us the opportunity to talk about what that experience meant. Ann and I construed the readings/questions as not allowing the children to be world makers, but rather treating them as world receivers. Ann then realized that bringing out preset readings and questions from two years ago was also not allowing herself as a teacher, an opportunity to be a world maker.

The Field Trips

The field trip experience to the 1881 school gave the children an opportunity to construct meaning about some different aspects of pioneer life, particularly related to children and schooling. They experienced what school life might have been like, played some games of the times, heard some information about the school and community, and saw a pioneer school and many of the objects that would have been in it. Back in their own classroom, the children wrote a tremendous amount of detail about what they had experienced and what they had learned about pioneer life.

> **Brenda**
>
> Today I learned that most schools are named by a first teacher's name or a very responsible person or mabey even the name of who descovered. I also learned that the lads most favorite game was count the rabbits, and the father's of the children would make them deerskin balls. The boys were called laddies and the girls were called lassies. The girls would dress up in long skirts and a fancy top the boys would wear overals and a shirt and vest. The girls would play anti-anti-I-over Jack's, and fox and geese. I also learned that the first girl teacher's name was Miss Osborne.
>
> **Penney**
>
> Today at the 1881 School I learned how things were back in the 18S mostly. Such as reading, games, aned a spelleing B. the teacher called us lassies and ladies I also learned that there were severeal additions to the school because the amount of children was growing alot the

games were called Anti-I over, marbles jacks, count the rabbits and fox and geese. I also learned that the old school was once a House and the people that lived in it loved walpaper and I learned that the school house was down by saskatchewan river and it flooded so they tied it down by a hook on the back of it so it wouldn't float away I also learned that the first legestlatetive building was in the gym of Macy avenue school.

Adam

I lrnd that 1881 school is srikt with the kids. The kids play anty anty I over and the boys playd kech the rabits

Timothy

it was scarry when adam was talking to Jason and the teacher turned around and smacked the stick on the desk and said put your hands on the desk and I thought she was going to smack adams nuckles but she didn't. then she turned to me and said stand up and put your hands on your desk and then I thought she was going to smack me on the bum but she didn't.

I also was intereted and thought that was neet was the little kinds of porjectors. one you would put a candel in it and that would be the light and you would put a little sort of film and it would show up on the wall.

Both Timothy and Adam made reference to the teacher's use of a willow switch. Timothy really personalized the experience by relating what happened when Adam and another boy were caught talking. Timothy's journal entry about the incident is a wonderful piece of narrative. There is a real sense of story and of audience. Timothy builds up suspense by writing "and the teacher turned around and smacked the stick on the desk and said put your hands on the desk and I thought she was going to smack adam's nuckles but she didn't." He repeats this sentence pattern exactly, in relation to what happened next, "then she turned to me and said stand up and put your hands on your desk and then I thought she was going to smack me on the bum but she didn't." We share Timothy's relief that both he and Adam were spared. Ann felt that the children really were afraid of being smacked, although there was no danger of this. The fact that the teacher broke her switch over a desk while demonstrating to the children what would happen if they were disobedient was very convincing.

Adam's journal entry sums up the same experience with a one sentence generalization, "I lrnd that 1881 school is srikt with the kids." Adam generalized his personal experience into a statement that school was strick in those days. From Timothy's account we get a sense of the emotions of the experience, the fear, the tension of not knowing whether the teacher would strike them with the switch. Adam's account, while perhaps less thrilling to read as a story, raises the experience out of the personal to the general. Were it not for Timothy's account of the experience in which Adam was involved, we would know nothing of the background to the formulation of Adam's generalization Both children have been able to put their experience in words in a very powerful way. The personalized account of the experience told with Timothy's flair, in combination with Adam's straightforward generalization about the experience is even more powerful. Unfortunately, Ann and I did not give the children the opportunity to share their journal entries and thus missed an opportunity for the children to enhance their constructions further through negotiation of their individual realities.

Penney's journal entry is extraordinary in the amount of historical detail she remembered and related. Although she was interested in the games that children of the day played, and mentioned them as did many of the other children, in this entry she recounts three historical facts about the school (additions, used as a house by people who loved wallpaper, tied down by a hook to keep it from floating away in a flood) and also writes about the first legislature being held in the gym of another early school.

Brenda's journal entry after the field trip highlighted the games and clothing of the children of the day. She was interested in the naming of schools and related three possible ways that one could have a school named in one's honor; have been the first teacher, be a very responsible person, or be someone who discovered something.

The Senior Citizen Interview

The children had another experience where they had access to a primary source of information. Ann had arranged for a senior citizen to come to talk to the children about what her life had been like as a child in the early 1900s in Alberta. The children prepared, as a class, a set of questions to ask about daily life. The senior responded to these, as each child asked their question and the others recorded answers on their own individual sheets. The woman had been a teacher and had come prepared to tell the children a number of stories. She discovered they were more interested in asking their own questions! Journal entries after this experience again reveal the unique nature of meaning constructed by the children from this experience.

> **Timothy**
>
> I wonder how many people came to western canada to farm or ranch or both. I thought that the kids would fight the indians or be a frade of them but know.
>
> **Adam**
>
> Born in vermilion and raised on a farm mrtl ford is helthy

Brenda

Yesterday I learned that her most change since shen she was a little girl was the transportation, and I diddent know that I thought that it would be somthing else

Penney

When myrtle ford came I learned that they used coal oil for there lamps some times and that her Father came to be a rancher and came by train partly and he became a mixed farmer and her mother was buisy in the house doing house and farm chores there clothes only got washed once a week boys wore nickers and anybody wore sweaters girls wore skirts and dresses and in the winter they wore long underwear and cotton stockings in her spare time she wennt on nature walks and went sleding and skating also playing checkers with her dad her chores were takeing care of the animals, help mothers, pick berries, help in the feilds, stack up fire wood the medicnes were

Penney stopped here. She had started at the beginning of the interview sheet and was basically recounting everything that the senior had said in answer to each question. There were a total of 23 questions and Penney's retelling stops at number 11. She handed in to me with her journal her interview sheets with the answers she had recorded—as if to say, if you want to know any more read the sheets yourself!

I talked with Timothy the day after the senior interview and asked him what he had liked best, asking questions or hearing stories. He immediately talked about the issues he had raised in his theme journal.

T: Well, I didn't know that the people wanted to ranch. I thought they all wanted to farm.

T: Yes. I thought they only came for farming. I never even thought of ranching.

R: No. I usually don't make a distinction. But she was making a distinction between coming to have

T: farm land and ranch land

R: Yes. The ranch land is more when you raise cattle . . . on the land and I guess that's what her dad wanted to do. Right? That's why he came out here.

T: Yes. Plus some of her stories were interesting. I thought that they would fight with the Indians kids in there. I noticed that too.

R: I didn't understand what you meant there. Tell me a little bit more about that.

T: Well, I thought that if they came across that they would start calling them "Indian people" something like that and fight them or something. Or they would, they would always run away. I never knew they would not be afraid of them or anything . . . or bug them or something like that.

The senior had explained, in answer to the question, "Did you have any experiences with Indians and if so what was it like?", that they rarely saw any but that once in a while some would ride across the fields. She said that her father talked to her and her brothers and sisters about not being afraid of the Indians, and they weren't, but that others in the community were. Listening to the senior, Timothy had been given another alternative to consider about how to react to Indian people. He was creating new realities and was using writing (theme journal) and now talk to assist him in this process. That he is negotiating new meaning about Indian people in light of the senior's information and reactions is clear in both his writing and in his conversation the next day. "I thought that the kids would fight the indians or be a frade of them but know." The, "but know" at the end of the sentence indicates that Timothy is questioning what he had thought, negotiating meaning with what the senior had said. He restates his previous constructs in our conversation. The constructs he held for reacting to the presence of Indian people included name calling, fighting them, running away. Timothy is examining these in light of another possibility which the senior's description has raised. "I never knew they would not be afraid of them or anything . . . or bug them or something like that." This example is interesting because it also shows Timothy examining his constructs about Indian people in the third person. He does not say, "I would call them names, fight them or run away." In both his writing and speech, he depersonalizes his constructs by saying he thought these are the ways that Myrtle and her brothers and sisters would have reacted. This allows him to think about his own fears and reactions, but at a distance.

This is a good example of how we continually negotiate our meanings with other possible meanings which confront us at any given moment. During this process, our realities are contradicted, modified and/or confirmed. Here we see Timothy's realities being contradicted and modified, as he creates new meaning and sees another "possible world."

Adam's journal entry after the senior interview was, as usual, short and fascinating. I had the opportunity to ask Adam about it, particularly why he thought Myrtle Ford was healthy. "I don't know. She just looked healthy." This was in our first interview, a few weeks after the guest speaker. Later in May, when I interviewed Adam again, I asked what he had thought of having Myrtle Ford as a guest speaker.

A: It was nice . . . it was pretty good because she knew about the history.

R: She'd actually lived through it hadn't she?

A: Yeah.

R: I bet your grandpa can tell stories like that.

A: Yeah, he was born in the first world war . . . it lasted for at least four years.

R: That's right. It went from 1914 to 1918.

A: And then the second world war went for six.

R: You're right! How do you know all that?

A: My grandpa told me . . . I asked him about it and he told me.

R: In your theme journal you said Myrtle Ford was healthy. What made you think that?

A: I don't know.

R: Was it some way she looked, something she said, or something that you thought in your head, that made you think she was healthy?

A: Well it was what I thought in my head.

R: Mmmm, can your remember why you thought that in your head?

A: rrrrrrrr . . . .

Adam recognized the guest speaker as a primary source of historical information, "It was pretty good because she knew about the history." He wasn't able to articulate much about his thinking regarding Myrtle Ford's health. Ann and I discussed the meaning of Adam's statement and Ann speculated about it as we discussed this example at our parent presentation the following October:

> A: We tried to understand that, and were sort of reading between the lines because she did tell us that she had to come a day early because she was going skiing. And so we're assuming that this child was amazed that a 76 year old woman was able to talk so well with them and answer all their questions and be lively and tell stories and be going skiing. That's the only thing.

Brenda's response in her theme journal was in relation to the guest speaker's answer to a question about what was the biggest change she had seen from the time she was a child to the present. The senior had explained that she thought the biggest changes had occurred in transportation and communication. Brenda's response indicates that this is not what she was expecting. Her constructions were being contradicted. In response to Brenda's entry, I wrote, "Like what?" and she wrote back, "Like well I don't know really." She was surprised by the guest speaker's answer but was not able to articulate what her expectation had been, other than "something else."

Creating Poetry and Murals

The murals and poetry the children created allowed insights into the meanings they were constructing about pioneers and pioneer life. The topics chosen, in and of themselves, provide some interesting information. Ann had asked the children what they could show in a picture. Two of the six topics were related to field trips (1881 school, clothing). One topic, the voyageurs, was directly related to the film of the same name they had seen. The other three topics, travel, shelter, and what pioneers saw when they got here, were related to the film, *The Drylanders*. The choice of topics less clearly reflected the information the children had been gathering from the readings. Adam, Timothy, Brenda and Penney were in four separate groups.

The final poems of the groups of the four profile children were as follows:

Brenda's Group

Shelter

Using helping hand,
while others gather sand,
build with bricks and sticks!
Some of them use log,
while others gather sod,
people live in barns,
others live on farms!

Adam's Group

They Had Hope

As they say their new land,
they knew they could make it grand.
they had hope.
As they looked across the weeds,
they could see the poplar trees,
they had hope.
The Indians they saw,
were standing with open jaws,
they had hope.
As they bent their backs,
they could see the railroad tracks,
they had hope.

As they tried to warm their toes,
they could see the buffaloes,
they had hope.
As they trotted near,
they could hear the birds by ear,
they had hope.

Timothy's Group Clothing

Laces down,
Hooks and eyes on shoes
Of brown.
Combinations buttoned up,
Corsets laced down,
Petticoats with hooks
And eyes wearing a
Dress of brown.

Penney's Group Pioneers travel

P-pioneer
I-immigrant
O-oxen
N-New West
E-emigrant
E-energy
R-railway

T-travel
R-river
A-animals
V-voyage
E-expedition
L-long journey

The poems were displayed in the hallway and the rest of the afternoon was spent working on the accompanying murals.

Adam was in the group working on what the pioneers saw when they first came to western Canada. His group called their mural, "The first sight of territory!!!!" The children had a large sheet of paper on which to draw; while the two girls who were part of Adam's group drew on the top two-thirds of the sheet, Adam claimed the bottom one-third. The mural was more a collage of ideas related to the title, as opposed to a unified picture. The girls drew trees, lakes and grasslands. Adam worked on an "Indian village." His drawings were a unified picture, and several weeks later in conversation, he explained to me the meaning of what he had drawn.

A: I put on most of those little trees around the lake and I put on the buffaloes and the Indians and the little village and . . . and there was a few Indians on horseback that had rifles and then there was this one Indian up on a hill with his bow and arrow who was going to shoot a buffalo.

R: You know a lot of things about how it was in pioneer times.

Adam's contribution to this mural was reflective of his constructions about what the pioneers saw when they came to western Canada. I don't know how much the group discussed the content of the mural or how who would do what portions was agreed upon. Adam had many opportunities in the films, books and pictures available to see pictures of covered wagons. Indian villages and buffalo hunting were never a focus of the theme, although he certainly may have encountered pictures of these in the many books about the classroom. Adam, however, did not use a book or picture as he was doing his drawing. He had in his mind what he was drawing, and in fact had a story to tell about his picture through which he was able to describe everything in his drawing three months later. What he depicted could have been a scene encountered by early pioneers to western Canada.

Timothy, Penney and Brenda also contributed to collage-like murals, where children in the group contributed some drawings that related to the topic, but did not create any kind of unified picture. Timothy was part of the group depicting clothing and when I joined his group, he was drawing overalls and a top hat. He, like Adam, was able to describe in some detail, three months later, what he had drawn on the poster. "I drew coveralls and those rompers or wompers, whatever they're called that little boys wore. They were comfortable and they were loose . . . and I drew the top hat, nightgown, and the petticoat and the muff." I asked him if he remembered any reasons why he had chosen those particular pieces of clothing. "Cause they're kinda boy's clothing . . . and everybody else was doing dresses and that and I couldn't think of anything." Although Timothy consulted some books for pictures, he did not keep them right open beside him.

Penney's major concern with the activity seemed to be the accurateness she was able to render in her contribution to the mural on pioneer travel. She spent much time pouring over pictures in books, keeping them right beside her and even painstakingly, in great detail, copying a sleigh. Her contribution to the mural included a horse, sleigh, baby carriage, and canoe, which she said looked like a banana! Three months later, she had difficulty remembering what she had drawn.

Brenda was in a group working on shelter. She drew a sod house and a log house. At the bottom of the picture, she had drawn a tent and clothesline made out of trees, both of which were very reminiscent of scenes from the film on the voyageurs. Brenda was one of the first children finished this activity, and was ready to begin work on depiction of her family tree with information she had collected on her "Family History" questionnaire.

On the day that the children had generated the topics for their murals and poetry, Ann had commented to me that it was interesting to her that their ideas were a reflection of films, field trips and the things they had "done." She said she thought a pattern was emerging. During our next noon-hour conversation we looked together at this statement in terms of the meaning of the children's constructions about pioneers and pioneer life, which had emerged in the murals and poetry.

R: Let's talk about this. It was interesting yesterday. M.F. [the senior guest speaker] was asking me what I was doing and I was explaining briefly. She said did I think that the kids learned more from things like field trips and activities and what not as opposed to traditional schoolwork. And I said, "Well, it kind of appears that way now." But you know, I'm not so sure about that. I mean I think here it is quite evident, but then a lot of what came out in here [the murals and poetry] was stuff they had been exposed to [in] the centre sheets as well.

A: Yes, right. I think that at the front of their minds are the field trips, but when they are asked to sit down and delve into them, then all the supportive material I've been having them do in the centres starts coming out. And maybe that's why . . . a frustrated teacher doesn't give the children an opportunity to show what they have learned in those supportive materials often enough. I feel fine. Last week I felt terrible about the impending boredom that they were expressing. Now, I don't feel that way anymore. I'm fine now. I know I've done a good job as far as bringing details and information to their attention and I also feel good because they are making it their own. And I think that is important. (February 10 tape)

In this conversation, we reflected on the children's construction of meaning as being influenced by both the field trips, films and the readings/questions. We agreed that the influence of both could be seen in the murals and poetry that the children had just completed. The critical issue for us became what the children were allowed to do with the information and the experiences they had been exposed to. We both saw the murals and poetry as ways for the children to individualize the information and "make it their own" through personal expression of the meaning of that information and those experiences. This raised a theme that became pervasive in our noon-hour conversations, related to how we as teachers reconcile the teaching of curriculum with the teaching of children. Ann saw the mural and poetry activity as a way to individualize and personalize the curriculum information she had been exposing the children to.

The Family Tree

On the day that the family tree activity was introduced by Ann, both Timothy and Brenda mentioned it in their theme journals. Timothy wrote, "today I like anns tree did you? it was quite long." Brenda's entry read, "Today I learned how to do a family tree and why they call it a family tree. People call it a family tree because of the branches of both." Timothy made an observation about Ann's family tree, indicated that he liked it and asked what I thought of it. Brenda focused on a new skill she had learned and on a new piece of information about what "family tree" meant.

During Week Six, both Brenda and Timothy worked on their family trees with information they had brought from home on the family history interview sheets. Brenda also brought her father's baby book, which contained a family tree for that branch of the family. Other than Ann's sharing of her family tree, the children had no other instruction on how to translate the information from the interview sheets into a visual depiction. As some of them began to do the activity, Ann had commented that she saw it as a great problem-solving activity, as the children struggled with how to present the information about the branches of their family on paper. Brenda and Timothy completed their family trees at school. Penney did her tree at home, with the assistance of her mom. Adam did not do one, although he eventually did bring back the family history interview sheets with information from his mother's branch of the family. This was all done in his own printing. The other three children had filled part of the sheets out and parents had completed the rest. The children's comments in the interviews after the theme was complete are revealing.

Adam

Yeah . . . got my family history filled out . . . my family tree, I didn't doooo . . .

R: Never got around to it?

Yeah . . . never got around to it.

Timothy

Well that was fun cause you got to see how far you could go back and I had my great great grandpa but then I forgot him and I phoned my dad and them, but they weren't there . . . at work, so . . . it's fun to see how far you can go back and see all the weird names that grandpa and them had.

R: They did have different names didn't they? So you went as far back as great grandparents?

Yeah and my mum and dad never, I never ever, I never really cared even about the names. I never put what my grandparents names were and then I found out.

R: Well, yeah cause most of the time you call them grandma and grandpa. You don't ever think they have first names.

Yeah, and my mum and dad call them mum and dad.

Brenda

In the interview after the theme was finished, my conversation with Brenda on her family tree focused on the fact that she had redone it twice because it got thrown away. I was commending her on her diligence and patience in completing it, and she explained to me that she had done it over again twice because she didn't want to get an "X" in Ann's book for not having it done! In our first interview, Brenda talked about the family history when asked about learning about the past. "Well you can interview your family with that thing and then when you get, you can learn what your own life would have been if you were those people." Brenda saw the family history as her link between the past and the future and as a way to compare the two. "And then when you get old, people will ask you because they'll might be poorer or might be richer or they might be the same."

Penney

Penney saw the family history as having intrinsic worth; "and sometimes you just want to know about your mother and father's history and what it was like a long time ago so you can maybe make things better in the future." Like Brenda, she sees the family history as a link between the past and the future.

The family tree activity seemed to help Brenda and Penney construct a sense of time, sequence and chronology and a sense of the effect the past can have on the future. This activity enables Brenda to talk about herself as a source of historical information in the future.

The Canada West Posters

The drawing of the Canada West posters by the children was an opportunity to see and hear them constructing meaning in a group. Penney, Timothy and Adam were in the same group, and so I spent time with them as they did this activity. The children generally seemed to understand the format and purpose of the posters and the group written answer to the question of "Were these advertisements dishonest? Explain" read:

> yes and no because the land was not free it cost ten dollars there was hail and storms and Bad winters (weather was not always good) but the land was good for farming lots of it good rain good crops (Trees were good and bad good because they could build a house with it bad because of having to clear all [underlined four times] the trees of the land to do farming.

This response indicates that the children are able to discern that the advertisements were not total lies; they were able to see two points of view and express this balance very well in the written response.

The poster project was another example of a way in which the children could personalize and individualize the content of the theme and have an opportunity to "make it their own" through talk with their group and through visual depiction.

The poster contained a set of railway tracks going diagonally across the page. These were started by Timothy. Penney took the bottom left hand corner of the poster and drew in a field of wheat made up of individual stalks and heads, including kernels and silks. Adam started working on a building, but when the girls decided that it was facing the wrong direction, it was "whited" out and turned into a haystack, which Adam completed. He also was shown by the other girl in the group how to draw stooks of wheat and then instructed where to put them on the page. Penney added a telegraph line that ran parallel to the railway tracks. The poster also contained a log house, a barn, a clothesline, and a surveyor's stake beside the wheat field, just like the one the man had used to identify his land in the film, *The Drylanders*. The telegraph line and the railroad track were on one of the sheets the children had used for information gathering prior to beginning the poster. The top of the poster read "Canada West" and the children put the Union Jack between the two words.

While working on the poster Adam suggested to the girls that he thought he would add a picture of a man, and indicated to them the cover of a book where there was a farmer with some kind of sickle cutting wheat. The girls said they didn't think this was a very good idea since the poster was to make people come to

Canada; showing work might not be good. One of them turned to me for approval and I told them to continue talking about it and asked Adam what he was thinking. Adam said he thought people might like to see that and they might think it was good that they had work here. The man and the sickle never did appear on the poster, but Adam's thinking reflected that he knew about conditions in Europe at the time, where people were poor and did not have work.

The children also created advertising brochures in their groups. The following week the posters were up around the classroom and the children were given the opportunity to read their brochures to the class.

The Research Project

At this point in the unit, Ann had planned for the children to do a major research project. She had five topics available for the children to choose from; a group of children would work together on each topic. During the week that the children had been working on the advertising posters and brochures, Ann had given each of them a sheet with the five topics on it and asked them to select their first, second and third choices. The topics available included, traditions and transportation, food, shelter, clothing and breaking land. Ann and I discussed at that time what format the projects should take. Ann wanted the children to work in groups, to each produce an individual written report on some aspect of the group topic, which then was to be shared with the class. The oral sharing of the written reports was to be accompanied by models and visuals where appropriate, and the whole group would have responsibility for these aspects of the presentation. Ann's question was whether to structure the research with the packages of materials she had available from two years before, or to have the children come up with their own ideas. The prepared materials consisted of questions on particular aspects of the topics and suggestions for activities including model making. As Ann raised this question with me and we discussed the pros and cons of the two different approaches to the project, she first thought she might like to let the children do their own library research on the topics. At the conclusion of the discussion, she had decided to have them use the available materials because of the number of expectations being placed on the children. Not only were they being asked to do research, and prepare written reports to be shared orally accompanied by visuals, but these tasks were to be done in a group setting.

The topics the children were able to choose from were all related to the previous field trips, films, readings to which they had been exposed up to this point. Groups of three or four children were assigned to each topic, based on their earlier choices. Timothy and Brenda were in the clothing group and Penney and Adam were in the shelter group. This major project involved the children for three and one-half weeks. The first week, they did the readings and questions on their topics and began the activities and models. The second week, the children continued these. The third week, the focus was on writing individual reports and preparation for the presentations to take place the following week. The fourth week, all the prepared models and charts were displayed in the classroom and the presentations took place.

The children's journals over this period of time are an interesting reflection of what they were doing. In the first week, they all talked about the information they were reading and answering questions about. The models they were building became the focus for the second week, and the "how to" of preparing the written report for oral presentation dominated their comments in the third week. The children also made written comments in their journals about group processes during this time, which is interesting given Ann's objective for the project of focusing on group skills.

Following is an example of journal entries and my responses during the research project.

Timothy

March 2 it was enteresting today reading. like I thought that they would put the top of the quilt on in sumer but it was in the winter.

March 3 today it was fun doing the quilt making espeshaly the sewing

March 9 now we have five peaces sewd on my first one didn't look well but I'm getting better its fun sewing what do you think

R: Well, I'm glad you are having fun. I don't particularly like sewing. I find it frustrating.

March 10 I don't only when tangels come up like today Brenda thought that my string was hers and I put the string through the cloth already once and she grabd the end of the string and started to wing it around and got it all tangled up then she found her string

R: What are the advantages of working together on the crazy quilt? What about disadvantages? Would you rather work on it alone?

March 11 sombody to look at your piece of clothe that you placed if it looks good or not they bug you

R: So, which way of working on this project is your preference?

T: the first one

March 13 it seamed fast sewing today and easy now theres so many different colours of cloth you canot choose

R: I noticed you cut off a piece of your quilt. Why was that? I agree the varied colors look terrific!

March 17 or else it would of took to long to make the rest. today ~~I got stuck a lot~~ I finished my report today

March 18 today it was fustirating doing my cover for my report cause you would draw somthi and it would not look good so you would have to errase it then it would make the whole paper look bad so you would have to throw it away.

Adam

March 2 I did not no that they had barn raxing bee

March 3 I lrnd that 20 to 30 men and boys woold gathr for a bilding bee

Brenda

March 2 Today I learned what a dresdon plate is. I also learned what a quilting bee is.

R: What did you learn about the quilting bee, Brenda?

B: While I learned that it was like a whole swarm of bees getting together!

Penney

March 2 today in theme I learned that the settlers usualy made their sod houses out of dry grasses from a dryed-up slough or a dryed-up creek bed they wanted those cind of grasses because they had long roots an were tough and matter together easily

March 3 today in theme I learned some of the advantages and disadvantages of sod houses and I learned that sod houses and lean-tos are the quickest cind of shelter

Penney's report was on sod houses, Adam's on building bees, Timothy's on the pioneer wardrobe and Brenda's on quilting. The reports enabled the children to put into their own words some of what they had been learning. From a skills point of view, the children had an opportunity to construct meaning about an effective report and oral presentation. The research project itself required participation in a group and involved the children in a true cooperative learning project, where each person's individual part was a necessary contribution to the successful completion of the whole. The research project involved the children directly in an experience where the issue of "Should we work alone or together?" was being lived.

The Pioneer Celebration Day

At the end of the pioneer celebration day, Ann asked the children to write in their theme journals.

> **Brenda**
>
> I've enjoyed all the fun times we've shared together and I'm glad that you picked this subject for theme (meaning you Ann). Today I enjoyed the tops, skipping and marbles best. I have one more thing to say, I learned almost every thing from this subject, meaning I didn't know much about this topic!!before!!
>
> **Adam**
>
> I liked the tops and tug of war.
>
> **Timothy**
>
> Today I enjoyed everything. I liked the skipping and marbles best. I liked watching everybody's play and poems and stories and I especially like the lemon race and the telephone game too. What did you like the best?
>
> **Penney**
>
> I learned how to work two different kinds of tops and I liked the other games called marbles, skipping, and hopscotch. We also played push winter out, lemon relay race, and telephone. At lunch we had a lunch box social and we had a recital after that. I though that the day was fun!

The Films

Two films were shown during the period of the theme. The theme journal entries of the children indicate some of the constructions each made in relation to the films.

The Drylanders

Penney

Today I learned that back then 160 Acres of land was only 10$ I also thought that the film was good.

(part of Ann's written response—Would you be tempted to become a pioneer if land cost only $10.00 today? Why? Why not?)

No Not exactly today because I couldn't Handle it myself

Adam

I LRND THE DAPESHN [depression] WAS 9 YEARS LONG

Brenda

Today I learned that what you hope for might come true.

Timothy

I liked the dirt house but how would they get heet and it would be smelly sometimes also it was funny when the dad ploud his first time it was crocked and how the nabors helped him biuld they house and share.

The Voyageurs

Penney

Today I saw in a film called the voyageurs tha they have dinners of watter, beans, pork, and they had biscuts of flower with flys, gravel, mud, skunk oil because they use skunk oil to protect them from the mosquitoes.

Adam

I LRND THAT THE PIONIRS CARYD 90 POWND SAKCES AND MABE EVNE 3. 4 or 5 SAKEC

Brenda

Today I learned that the voagers slept in canoes and they would wake the rest of the tribe up with a woden spoon on a pan.

Timothy

I thought that it was neat how theye got there and how long they had to canoue for plus could you imagun when ladys and bisness men came on the canou to get there would you like it or would they build a big ship to get there or what cause I sher could see you going on the canoe there

The personal responses of the children to the two films indicate some of the constructions each was formulating. The responses are very individual.

The Children's Experience of Working in Groups: Constructing Reality and Negotiating Meaning

While the children were involved in the theme activities they were not only constructing meanings about the specific content of pioneers and the general discipline of history. They were also constructing meaning about group processes. The importance of group processes was explicit in both the Alternative School philosophy and in Ann's belief about children, teaching and social studies. Group processes or participation skills, were a major goal of the provincial social studies program, being seen as one of the critical elements of effective citizenship.

The majority of these children had been in the Alternative School Program since kindergarten and so had had at least three years of an emphasis on group processes and an orientation to working in groups. Ann frequently demonstrated group problem-solving strategies with the class as a whole and encouraged the children to use these strategies in their small working groups. Although she hoped that they were using the group strategies, she was not aware of how much the children actually were using them. Ann always demonstrated the strategies with actual classroom issues or problems and never used role playing or artificial cooperative learning skills sessions. The group process strategies were not an end in themselves, but were a means to solve real problems, foster interaction and help the children "get on" with the tasks at hand. They also were a part of the total school day in Ann's classroom, and were not especially stressed during this particular theme, although Ann saw group process as an important part of social studies. The social studies issue for the pioneer theme was, "Should we work alone or together?" with the competing values of self-reliance and cooperation.

The talk, writing and actions of the children again provide images, glimpses of the "living actuality, the significant contours and pressures of individual minds" (Hull, 1985, p. 227) in relation to the children's constructions of group process.

Adam

On the first day of theme, Adam's journal entry read:

> I LrND THAT WORKING I GOPES [in groups] HAS ITS ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

Adam had stated, in precise language, the major generalization of the unit. He had pulled this out of a variety of opening activities done that day, including a brainstorm on things known about pioneers, a quilting activity where some children worked together and some alone, and a follow-up discussion and charting of the advantages and disadvantages of working alone and together.

Throughout the theme I observed Adam working alone and in groups. On the centre activities, he usually sat and worked alone. During the particular group activities such as the murals and poetry, the posters and brochures, and the research project, Adam worked with his group cooperatively but independently. For example, on the mural where Adam drew his Indian village, this was his own idea and although the girls he was working with gave him a hard time about it, he persisted and finished what he had started.

The next reference Adam made to his constructions about group process was in his journal entry of February 24th. He wrote:

> I LrND THAT TO BE ON TASK OTHERS NEED TO TOo.

I responded by asking if he had thought his group was not on-task and he wrote back:

> KIND OF.

This was the day that Adam worked with Penney and Timothy on the advertising poster. The day before, when I had been attempting to do some taping of the children's spontaneous conversation as they began work on the advertising section, Adam had made the other children laugh by his antics with and around the microphone. Ann had talked to him about this. The next day, Ann was away and there was a substitute in the classroom. Adam's journal entry reflects his belief that group work requires the cooperation of each member of the group to "be on task."

Timothy

Timothy's journal entry after the first day of theme read:

> I liked listening to all the neet ideas that were said and it also gave me what kind of ideas to think about to help the group and I liked working together and cutting out feet.

It is interesting that Timothy's next reference to group processes is during the same time as Adam's. Timothy's February 23rd entry says:

> today it was funny when we did the groups for some reason we must of had the gigels or something but it was also quite easy doing it with the gigles with out the gigles

> R: Sometimes the giggles make the work go faster, but sometimes they distract people from doing work. Do you think the tape recorder gave you the giggles? Or why did you have the giggles?

Timothy's February 24th response and entry read:

> it's becaus of adam even when he acts normal he is still funny.
> it was fun doing the chart and discussing it.

> R: Tell me why you like the discussion Timothy?

Timothy's February 25th response:

> Because it was just fun deciding and lisenning for all the neat Ideas

Timothy liked working in groups and was a popular group member. His constructions about group process include the value of hearing the ideas and opinions of others. This was noticeable in his response to me at a later date when I questioned him about the advantages and disadvantages of working together on the crazy quilt activity.

Timothy's March 11th entry:

> it goes faster and sombody to look at your piece of clothe that you placed if it looks good or not they bug you

In spite of the possibility of being "bugged," Timothy still thought that he preferred working together on the activity and when I asked him in our final interview what it was like working with Brenda, he replied:

> Sometimes she would boss you around and say I had an ugly piece—like what orange and dark brown looks together and stuff—but then I told her something, she shouldn't keep putting little pieces on or else we'll never get the quilt done. But otherwise, it's kinda helping a person cause then they know what to do if it looks bad, then you know that it looks bad and ya change the quilt.

Timothy's construction about group process indicates that he believes that Brenda gave him helpful feedback about his choices of colors and he reciprocated by letting her know that her use of small pieces would inhibit the completion of the project. He seems to imply that although hearing this feedback might not be pleasant, it is in the long run, "kinda helping a person cause then they know what to do." Timothy appears to have advantages/disadvantages as part of his construct about group work.

Earlier, in my initial interview with Timothy, I asked him about his first journal entry, related to the working together, working alone activity.

R: Why do you think you did that?

T: To learn what kind of quilts they had and make a quilt and for cooperation.

R: Okay. We did talk about working alone and working together. What do you think that's got to do with working with pioneers?

T: for the quilt?

R: No, for cooperation.

T: Well they had to do their chores and it was neat when she told us about how they did their chores and about how if you didn't do them, the whole family would suffer. Well, so, what was the question?

R: Well, you said that you did the quilting activity to learn about . . . about cooperation. And then I was saying what does that have to do with pioneers?

T: It's like you have to cooperate with each other for doing the farm and doing your chores and you have to babysit the little kids and so you have to cooperate with the other people in the group. And then if you are doing your chores or playing a game, then you'd have to cooperate in the pioneers.

In this conversation, Timothy is drawing on information he remembers from interviewing the senior guest speaker. When I asked him what the construct of cooperation had to do with the pioneers, he immediately began talking about the doing of chores and M.F.'s comments that unless each family member did their share, everyone suffered. These comments by the guest speaker had definitely led Timothy to reframe his construct of cooperation to include the notion that by not doing one's share, others would suffer. That the guest speaker's comments had affected Timothy's construct of cooperation was evident also in our final interview, when Timothy again included a comment about doing one's share or others would suffer in his response about what he thought he had learned about pioneers.

In the final interview with Timothy, I asked him why he thought they did to much work in groups. He replied:

T: ummm . . . so you get used to it. Cause you usually work in groups like in . . . be a doctor or something, ya work in groups, that kind of thing. And anyway . . . it's neater. It's better.

R: Can you say why?

T: umm . . . not really . . . not exactly . . . do you know?

R: Well, I think about the difference between working in groups and working by yourself . . .

T: Yeah, because you kind of learn more with the other person

R: Yeah.

T: and you get the work done faster.

R: Yeah, that's true and you hear other peoples' ideas . . .

T: Yeah.

R: which is kind of . . . talking you learn things from that and think of other things that you wouldn't of thought just by yourself. And you learn to get along with people . . . and to solve problems when they come up . . .

T: But I don't get along with the girls.

R: Well, I thought you did really well.

Timothy had a complex construct of the value of group work. He sees it as a necessary skill for future use and understands that much of what he does in life will involve working with other people and that one should "get used to it." He also has a feeling that it just is "neater" or "better" to work with others although he couldn't at that point articulate this any further but was interested in pursuing it so said to me, "Do you know?" When I said I thought about the difference between working in groups and by yourself, he immediately had two ideas about why group work was neater and better; you learn more with the other person and you get the work done faster. I gave him another reason, which was one he had written often about in his theme journal and that was, to hear the ideas of others. The only one of my other ideas that didn't "fit" for Timothy was that group work helped you learn to get along with others. To this he remarked that he didn't get along with the girls. My observations did not indicate that this was true and I gave him examples of working on the clothing mural and the research project with the girls and doing very well and not seeming to mind at all. He accepted this by replying to the last comment about not minding at all, "Nope!" I can only assume that part of his construct for how grade four boys are supposed to interact with girls was the cause of his initial comment about not getting along with them.

Penney

Penney's journal entry on the first day of the theme read:

> Today in theme I learned that Pioneer means (in Greek or latin) Foot.
> I also learned That if you work together and co-operate the Job will
> get done quicker and better.

It appears that Penney had understood the advantages of working together. I responded by asking her two questions:

> Do you like working together?
> Can you think of any times when working alone is better?

Her answers to the two questions respectively were: "Sometimes" and "Yes."

These answers became more meaningful as I observed Penney in the classroom and came to know her better. Penney chose most often to work alone on the readings/questions activities. I came to understand that detail was very important to her. In her theme journal, she recounted events of a particular day in sequence and in great detail. She was careful with her spelling and wrote her responses in complete sentences. She sometimes copied the question before answering it. Penney also found detail important in her art work to the point of wanting her drawings to be a photographic representation. When working on the group mural and poetry she pored over pictures of transportation during pioneer times and painstakingly drew in details; at one point she traced a sleigh. While working with the group on the Canada West poster, she erased words to correct spelling on the group answer sheet, and I heard her tell one group member not to color any more of the wheat kernels because it "wrecked the detail" she had so carefully done on them. On the research project where Penney was in the shelter group, she was concerned about detail on the miniature pieces of furniture she was making for the model of the log cabin; her concern for the accuracy of the sod house model led to it being done twice. Penney did not complain about group work and seemed to work well with others in her groups, despite her penchant for detail and accuracy.

During the first week of theme, Penney made this notation in her journal, probably while working on the title page for the binder where she would keep answers to questions and other theme-related material: "I also learned that nobody can draw perfectly and it doesent matter realy how it looks as long as your satisfied with it." Although Penney appears to realize that her work to reproduce images photographically is unrealistic, she was not often satisfied with what she did produce.

In our final interview, I asked Penney, "Why do you think you do so much work in groups?"

P: mmm . . . I don't know.

R: Do you think there's a reason for it?

P: There must be.

R: Why must there be?

P: Cause if there was no reason, why would we do it?

R: That's true.

P: I don't know . . . .

R: Ok. Do you like working in groups?

P: Sometimes.

R: What, what is it that makes it when you like it?

P: mmmm . . . good people to be with and people that work.

R: OK. And so when you said good people to be with what do you mean?

P: People that I can handle to work with.

R: OK. And what are those people like, what are the kind of people like that you can handle?

P: Not always getting into trouble and staying on task and stuff like that.

In her first day journal entry, Penney had indicated that "if you work together and co-operate the job will get done quicker and better." She did see some advantages to working together, although I'm not sure that group work is her preference. Through later conversation, we were able to clarify that Penney's construct of group process contained some conditions—that is, group work could be good with the right people. These people would be good to be with, they would be workers, they would not get into trouble and they would stay on-task. Penney was very aware of her needs for these conditions in group work when she stated she needed "good people," "like people I can handle to work with." She had a realistic understanding of what made for a successful group process and believed that group work was not always the best process, depending on who one had to work with. It is interesting that Penney did not state why she thought they did so much group work, but again expressed her faith in the teacher, Ann, to be providing the children with activities that were meaningful and had reason. She said, "there must be" a reason for it, "cause if there was no reason, why would we do it?"

Brenda

Brenda's first journal entry regarding group process was on February 24th, the same week that both Adam and Timothy made similar entries.

> Today I learned that our group dousent cooporate and that means we need to practice.

This was the week that the children were working on the Canada West advertising posters and on February 24th there was a substitute in the classroom.

Brenda wrote about group cooperation again on March 3rd:

> Today I learned that when you work hard on somthing and it gets thrown away or somthing hapens to it you feel very mad at those people. I also learned that if you cooprate more often again your work goes faster.

The first sentences makes reference to the fact that Brenda's family tree diagram was thrown out for the second time. Brenda and Timothy were now working on the crazy quilt as part of their research project. This was a satisfying experience in group work for Brenda; on March 10th her journal entry read:

> Today I learned that if you concintrate on your work you will get 7 peises of cloth done

Brenda most often chose to work with others on the readings/questions and was a popular group member. Her construct of cooperation included the notion that it was necessary for getting the task done. In our first interview, Brenda mentioned that she and J. worked together on the reading/question sheets. I asked her to tell me about what they did when the worked together.

> Well, we both have our own ideas and she would tell me mine and I would tell her hers or something like that. Or else she might say, "Well mine are all right because I know that," or something . . . but if not, then we just check each others work; what we haven't put down, and she says, "Well I know what it is," and I check. But well, we keep our own ideas if we both want to do something different, but if we both are looking for the same book, but we both see it at a different angle, then we try to prove it, who is right. But we don't go, "Cause it's mine and I've got it right."

This was a marvellously rich description from Brenda of how she and her partner work together on the readings/questions. She first explains that each person has her own ideas and that they share with each other what these are. She explains that sometimes her partner tells her that her answers are all right (because she has already checked them with the key and/or Ann—Brenda said something here but it was not clear on the tape—this is my guess). She says that if this is not the case (correct answers have been confirmed) that they check each other's work and help each other put the answers down. Brenda then says that if they don't agree on what the answer is, then they each keep their own idea. But, she adds, if they are both looking in the same book for the answer but interpret what the book is saying differently, they will try to prove to the other person that their view is the right one. Her last comment, "But we don't go, 'Cause it's mine and I've got it right," was said with intonation to indicate that they did not use a simple arrogant argument to prove which answer might be better, but really attempted to explain and prove their "angle" or interpretation using the evidence at hand. Brenda also clearly indicates in this explanation her understanding that the same text can be interpreted differently by two different people. Ann had said that Brenda was able to talk about her learning. This conversation was a clear demonstration that this was so.

It is interesting to contrast what Timothy had to say in response to the same query about how he worked with his partner.

T: Well, I usually go like this and then I think of the idea and then write down and he sort of checks over, sees what the answer says.

R: So you both read it and you write your own answer down?

T: I do and then sometimes he looks. Well, he just says it. When he does it by himself he says it real short. He doesn't say it in real sentences; like mine is a whole page and his is just that much.

R: And then do you check it out with each other and see what you've written down.

T: No.

R. Not really? You just talk together?

T: Talk together.

It appears that Timothy and his partner work quite differently from Brenda and hers. Although they sit physically together, from what Timothy says it seems that they work more or less independently. Timothy writes his own answer and his partner looks at it. Timothy suggests that his partner's individual answers are much shorter than his own and that they don't check out what the other has written. From what Brenda has said, she and her partner appear to work more collaboratively on seeking, checking, explaining and debating answers.

All of the children had constructs about cooperation that included the notion that working together had advantages and disadvantages. During our February 17th noon-hour conversation, I asked Ann how the cooperative mode was emphasized within the Alternative School community and within the classroom.

> . . . the only time we ever talk about non-competition is when I'm handing back papers which I have graded and that's normally math. Something very objective like that. And I say to the kids, "This is your private information, if you wish to share it with someone else because you are pleased or distressed or whatever, you may, but you cannot ask someone else what their results are, cause it's private and it really has nothing to do with you, what anyone else does." And that's really the only time that I even talk about the fact that we are not a competitive school. Most of the time, it's done in other very subtle ways like the fact that I do a lot of group work. The fact that, the poetry and murals is not one child's mind, it's the group's mind. (February 17 tape)

Ann went on to explain that the cooperative mode of interaction was reinforced by the fact that parents came in frequently to work with the children. Not only is this a demonstration of cooperation in terms of both the parents and Ann being "teachers" of the children, but it also demonstrates a sense of community to the children. Ann pointed out that this was reinforced by the fact that the parents worked with all the children, not only their own. "They, all the children become their children and anyone who doesn't think like that is really on the outside of the circle." I asked Ann if this attitude was explicit in that the parents talked about it, or the teachers discussed it among themselves or with the parents. She replied, "It is just an attitude that is built in." It certainly is explicit in the Alternative School Program philosophy and so must be at the very least implicit with the parents as they choose the program. On further reflection, Ann expressed the parental attitude toward cooperation in this way, "But they are our kids. We need to think about it in the community sense." She said that in 14 years with the school, first as a parent and then as a teacher, she had only encountered one parent who did not share this belief. "The rest of us have had a collective concern about all the children."

In our March 10th noon-hour conversation, Ann and I reflected on group processes we had been observing in the classroom. We began talking about the decision making the class had done when Ann introduced to the class the potential problem of dealing with group members who did not do their share of the research project. The children suggested three possible consequences: exclusion from the model-building activities of the project, exclusion from swimming privileges, exclusion from the research group. Ann had the children discuss the potential problem and possible consequences prior to the commencement of the group research project. As we reflected on what the children had decided, Ann said, "They were quite consequential types of things weren't they? They were really very good. It's how I get them to think, I try to. It takes awhile though." I told Ann that over the last 10 weeks, I had seen her give the children many opportunities to make decisions that affected them and had also seen them using strategies in their small groups that had been demonstrated by her. She responded by saying, "Oh really? I'm just not aware of it." Ann was pleased to hear what I had been observing because she said, "I think it's very important to empower them with that. Then you get better cooperation." I raised the notion of this kind of empowerment being critical to the concept of social education, and my feelings that the social studies program in and of itself would not produce responsible citizens if the structure of the school and classroom did not allow children opportunities for lived decision making. We had talked about the "hidden curriculum" previously and the impact of everyday demonstrations of power, authority and decision making within the classroom and school on children's constructs about group processes for cooperation and decision making.

A: Yes. I agree with that totally . . . the hidden curriculum, or agenda, whatever you want to call it, is very important. So I just get thrilled to death when you hear them having to make a group decision that's child oriented, and they choose some of the methods that we do. They choose a number between one and 10 and the closest people . . . [child or group who has the number or closest to it, has the decision in her/their favor]. (March 10 tape)

I asked Ann the source of her belief in and ability to use these demonstrations. Was it the kind of person she was, was it her beliefs about children and learning, was it the Alternative School Program philosophy, was it the social studies program or was it any or all of these? Ann replied that it was a combination of all of those elements and went on to explain.

> Because I thoroughly believe that social studies is a learning of social skills and human history is a recording of human behavior. And some things that happened in history worked out well, and other things didn't. So looking back on it gives us an opportunity to stand back and look objectively and define why it didn't work or why it did work. But when they [the children] are right in the middle of it, the only way they can feel it, is to allow them as close to reality experiences as it may be. So the decision making and methods of making objective decisions, the way of making judgments have to be practically applied and it can't always be done during role playing . . . the role playing helps them to think about the historical aspects but it doesn't always work for transfer to real life situations.
>
> But to say that you can role play kind behavior in the classroom and to expect to see it out on the playground without being out there with them, helping them, guiding them and facilitating out there—it just doesn't happen. (March 10 noon-hour conversation)

With respect to the relationship of history to group processes, Ann saw two lines of learning for the children. She says that human history is the recording of human behavior and that children can look at history and see the consequences of different types of human behavior. This is on one level, but is still removed from the lived experiences of the children. Ann believes that children must also live decision making related to different types of human behavior and its consequences. She believes that adults must "be there" to "help," "guide" and "facilitate." This again raises the critical nature of demonstrations for the children of suggestions, alternatives, practical examples of how to solve problems and cooperate. Ann sees role playing as a possible way to help children think about human behavior in its historical context, but not as a substitute or way of transferring ways of behaving to their own lives. She believes that this must be done in the context of demonstrations by an adult or more experienced person in helping children to deal with lived decision making. Vygotsky talks about this in terms of zone of proximal development, Smith in terms of kids becoming members of the club.

The Importance of Social Interaction: Peer Talk

The children in Ann's classroom had many opportunities to talk to each other as they worked on theme activities. Since most of the activities and projects were structured by Ann to be done in groups, even where an individual product might be expected, peer talk was a legitimate and familiar aspect of the classroom interaction. Ann's expectation, which was understood by the children, was that tasks done in groups were to be taken seriously and completed in the time allotted. All four of the profile children at some point in their journal entries indicated an understanding of these expectations. The journal activity was not preceded by any class or small group talk nor was there any sharing among the children of what had been written. Both Ann and I agreed that this was something we should have done.

With the group work and accompanying talk and movement taking place constantly, I found it very difficult to tape record the children's spontaneous conversations. The children worked in various locations, the floor, the hallway and adjacent empty classroom. They moved around, and with several groups working at one time, there was a considerable amount of noise. The fact that theme time often occupied several hours during a school day, also made audiotaping a challenge. I did tape the spontaneous conversation of one group as they worked on their poster to advertise for settlers to come to Canada. This was approximately three hours of time, an hour and a half one afternoon and another hour and a half the following morning. Throughout the theme, I spent time with groups of children as they worked and later recorded in my field notes pieces of their spontaneous conversation and observations.

The children's spontaneous peer conversation as they worked on group tasks centered on "on-task talk" and "off-task talk." On-task talk included talk about what needs to be done, how it will be done, who will do what, the accuracy and authenticity of historical information being used, clarification and extension of historical information, and regulation of own and other's behavior related to the task. Off-task talk included talk to maintain and enhance social relationships, for example, talk about birthdays and birthday parties, about loose teeth, about classroom relationships and about out of school activities such as sleepovers. While concern is sometimes expressed over the time children spend on seemingly off-task talk when working in groups, it may be that the social relationships maintained and enhanced by such talk are a requirement for the construction of personal meaning and in fact sustain the on-task talk and activity. This would be consistent with the Vygotskian view that all higher functions, including thought, occur first between people, "as actual relations between human individuals" (1978, p. 57), with Bruner's view that most learning is a communal activity and that the child makes his knowledge his own "in a community of those who share his sense of belonging to a culture" (1986, p. 127), and with Halliday's view that the social semiotic, the system of meanings available in the culture, is a required context for the making of individual meaning, "this process takes place inside his own head; it is a cognitive process. But it takes place in contexts of social interaction, and there is no way it can take place except in these contexts" (1975, p. 139).

Courtney Cazden (1986) reviewed research done in classroom discourse with her central focus being how speech unites the cognitive and the social. Studies reviewed all had some elements of qualitative analysis of actual classroom talk. In her writing on interaction among peers, she suggests that "most research in classroom discourse has focused on interactions between students and their teacher, either because these are considered the only sites of important action or because they are easy to overhear and record" (1986, p. 448). Cazden states that studying peer talk may be important to discern its role in official academic tasks as well as its role as an unofficial component of classroom life. Citing Vygotsky and Piaget, Cazden suggests that officially peer talk may have both cognitive and motivational benefits, as it allows children to see that there are perspectives other than their own, as well as providing a relationship context where, "children can reverse interactional roles with the same intellectual content, giving directions as well as following them, and asking questions as well as answering them" (1986, p. 449). Ann Haas Dyson (1987) suggests that when looking at peer talk, the lines between academic or on-task talk and social or off-task talk become blurred because "peer talk is viewed potentially valuable for sociolinguistic and cognitive development" (1987, p. 397). She argues that "to reveal children at their intellectual best," we need to study peer talk that is generated by more "holistic" and "world-creating" tasks as opposed to talk generated by "bits and pieces of wholes."

In her study of young children's spontaneous peer talk and its relationships to their written text production, Dyson concludes that the children's "independent mental worlds are nurtured by their cooperative social lives" (1987, p. 415). She describes that as the children worked individually on their journal writing, their spontaneous talk with each other served to "create and critique imaginary worlds." Through their representations, directions, questions and opinions, they "constructed worlds together—and interacted about their separate activities—analyzed the adequacy of each other's efforts and served as an interested and perhaps even appreciative audience" (1987, p. 415). Dyson suggests that, collaboratively, the children accomplished tasks that some might have considered "over their heads," such as extending story boundaries and critiquing the logic of texts. She also suggests that the individual achievements of the children were enhanced and that "individual reflections were linked to spontaneous social accomplishments" (1987, p. 416). Dyson concludes that premises which state the children achieve because of time spent on-task need to be questioned in light of her findings. "My observations suggest that the 'academic' and the 'social' are not so simply—or profitably—separated" (1987, p. 417). She argues that the social support and social energy generated by spontaneous peer talk, in the course of working on tasks worth talking about, can contribute substantially to intellectual development. Given that this type of talk is going to occur anyway in what Cazden has called the unofficial peer culture, the notion of using the social energy generated by such talk instead of working to stifle or eradicate it, is an intriguing one.

In Ann's classroom, peer talk was a dominant feature of the social interaction, particularly during theme time. Group work on group projects was the characteristic activity. Unlike the children in Dyson's study, who were engaged in peer talk as they wrote individual stories in their journals, the peer talk in Ann's classroom was focused primarily on common tasks related to the social studies historical theme of pioneers. Because of Ann's theme approach, large blocks of time, from one to three hours, were spent by the children working on activities. In this type of organization, where children not only have freedom to talk but also to move about, distinctions between on-task and off-task talk or between academic and social talk become problematic. I found that the talk the children engaged in was both social and academic, both on-task and off-task. There was talk related to the subject and tasks at hand, but there was also talk related to the maintenance and extension of social relationships. That these young children, eight and nine years old, worked for long periods of the day in this manner, is indicative that the social energy generated by peer talk sustained lengthy periods of attention to academic tasks.

The following examples of the children's talk were recorded as Penney, Adam, Timothy and Janet worked on a group poster to advertise for European settlers to come to Canada. The children are just beginning the task and are discussing a title for the poster. They talk about where it should go, what kind of letters should be used and how big they should be. One of the children is heard to say, "Be on task!" Another says, "Let's just do this. It has to be done by tomorrow." Someone says, I think to Adam, "Go sit at the other table if you can't cooperate." One of the children directs, "She isn't helping us" to me and I think is referring to

Penney. Janet says, "We'll do a big Canada. Should it be all capitals? Let's have a vote."

T: Are we going to do a train track?
A: We could put a farm, farms on each side of the railway.
J: Would they be that close? Would people like living next to the railway?
T: You can get there with the railway. Can we do a railway?

A: I'm going to do the colors of the Canadian flag on it.
J: Wasn't it the Union Jack flag then?
A: So if we got a picture . . .
J: Go to the library . . .
A: Oh the Grade Four math books . . . there's one in there . . .

T: I'm going to do a train track right here.
T: (to A.) You know what Ann told you.
J: (to A.) Why don't you draw a barn and farm?
A: I could do a stack of hay . . . I'll draw a barn.

P: (to A.) What are you doing?
A: Coloring this red.
J: Is he supposed to?
T&J: You didn't tell us. We didn't say yes.
A: At least I told you.

J: A long time ago when they really did these posters, did they get someone to draw them?

J: We'll just have to turn this into . . . because this isn't what [it] would look like.

J: I know. Should we put a post with a number on it? You know like their address.

P: Would there be wheat there already?

A: . . . a farmer with one of those wheat cutters.

A: Oh yeah. There's one on the cover of a book . . . [Adam goes out to get book]

Adam came back with the book and said maybe he would add a man with the [scythe or sickle] to the poster. Janet and Penney weren't convinced that this would be a very good idea since this was a poster to make people come [to Alberta] and that was work. They asked me what I thought and I asked Adam. What he explained was that he thought people might like to see that because they might think that it was good that they had work here.

These excerpts from the children's talk while working on the advertising poster reflect some of the ways in which the spontaneous peer talk clarified, expanded, extended the children's constructions, in this case related to pioneers coming to Alberta. We can see from the talk that the children not only had to think about what should go on the poster that would attract settlers, but they had to bring knowledge to bear about conditions in Europe.

Directing Their Own and Other's Behavior—Getting the Task Done

These children certainly did not need the teacher with them at all times in order to work on the task. Getting the task done was of primary concern and the talk of the children indicates how they directed each other's behavior in that direction: "Be on-task, Let's just do this. It has to be done by tomorrow. Go sit at the other table if you can't cooperate. She isn't helping. You know what Ann told you. What are you doing?"

Problem Solving and Decision Making—Who Will Do What and How

The children had a task to do, design a poster that would have attracted settlers to Alberta. In their groups they had to decide what would go on the poster, where it would go, how it would be done and who would do the various tasks. Timothy, Janet, Adam and Penney first tackled the title. They didn't discuss what the title of the poster would be—they were calling it "Canada West." One of the information sheets they had just worked on had "Canadian West" in big bold letters. It also had a railway track, from the bottom of the page receding into the distance. Through their talk they made decisions about where to put the title, the kinds of letters and how big they should be. They voted to decide if the letters should all be capitals. Timothy wanted to put the train track on the poster and Adam decided he could put farms on each side of it. There was some question from Janet, who like Penney, was very concerned with historical authenticity and accuracy, about whether or not the farms would be that close to the railway and if people would like living next to a railway. Timothy pointed out that "you can get there with the railway," implying that that would be attractive to would-be settlers, a way of getting to their new land. The children basically put what they were individually interested in on the poster. There was a concern for historical accuracy, and talk was used to clarify what could go on the poster, as with the railway. This also occurred with the flag. The children used majority rule as a decision-making strategy, very rarely going to Ann. A problem arose when it was noticed that Adam, who did start to draw a barn after he finished the flag and coloring the Canada West letters, was drawing the building upside down on the poster. He was working from the top side of the paper and had oriented the building toward himself. He had been drawing with a felt pen, so it could not be erased. Penney and Janet were horrified, but using "whiteout" they covered up some of the damage and then had Adam change the shape into a big haystack. Janet worked on a farm house and Penney drew stalks of wheat, complete with silk! Peer talk was used to problem solve and make decisions, giving the children an opportunity to do these things independently of the teacher, related to real problems and decisions they were facing in doing the group task.

Clarifying and Extending Constructions

Working on the group project with their peers in a setting where spontaneous talk was legitimized, the children were able to clarify and challenge ideas through questions, explain and expand ideas and offer suggestions to each other. There were frequent examples of this as they worked on the poster; the challenge about the proximity of the railway and the farm; clarification of which flag Canada would have been under at the time; suggestions about where to place things on the poster; how to draw them and color them. Through some of this talk, the children were also clarifying and extending some of their historical constructions. Janet and Penney were particularly concerned with accuracy and authenticity, and through their questions clarified constructions for themselves and Adam and Timothy. "Would they [farms] be that close? Wasn't it the Union Jack flag then? A long time ago when they really did these posters did they get someone to drawn them: Would there be wheat there already?" These kinds of questions also provided the children with opportunities to explore the time construction of "then" and "now" and to move back and forth between the time dimensions.

In the children's spontaneous peer talk, there were also examples of how the task at hand "triggered" past experiences that the children reconstructed in this new context. For example Adam, who was in Grade Three, remembering that the Grade Four math book was a source for a picture of the Union Jack (he also was the one who remembered the book with the picture of a man with a sickle); Janet's reference to the post with a number on it, "like their address" came directly from a scene in the film *The Drylanders*; Penney deciding to add a telegraph, which promoted a discussion on whether this was accurate for the times and her remembrance of being told at a field trip site that the first telegraph in the city had been located there. Being able to use their previous experiences and constructs in this way gave them individual opportunities to frame and reframe their constructions, to make something further of their experiences, but it also enriched the experiences and constructs of each child participating in the conversation. As a group, they "went beyond" what they may have constructed individually. Certainly, there is no doubt that the spontaneous group conversation provided opportunities to make connections that the children by themselves would never have had. This was a different context from whole class to teacher, teacher to small group, or teacher to individual. As Dyson points out in her study, this does not minimize the teacher's role but rather suggests "that children's achievements may not be linked solely to teacher-child interactions. Children's academic accomplishments can be influenced by their relationships with each other, as well as with the teacher" (1987, p. 416).

Maintaining and Extending Social Relationships

The spontaneous peer talk was not always related to the topic and task at hand. Because the talk was not controlled by question/answer format, nor by the constant presence of the teacher, the children did take time for humor and social conversation related to items of current interest such as birthdays, sleepovers and loose teeth. It seemed to me that talk about the academic topics and tasks was comfortably nestled within talk about day-to-day matters. As I reflected on the noon-hour conversations between Ann and me, they did not seem to be that much different from the peer conversations of the children. We had an hour to reflect on the previous week's happenings, using my field notes which Ann had a copy of prior to our conversation. Our talk was interspersed with personal and professional matters of current concern. My typist pointed this out to me when she said she had not transcribed a lengthy portion of a tape because we were talking about career aspirations and not the children and classroom happenings!

My observations of the children were that this type of talk was evident and that it was not intrusive. Rather, it served to maintain and enhance a context of openness, trust and mutual interest. It sustained prolonged periods of talk related to academic topic and tasks. Polanyi says we know with our whole selves. We are social beings, and do not stop being social beings when we turn our attention to "academic" matters. If the social semiotic, the network of meanings in the culture, is a higher order system of meaning of which language is one subset, it may be that rather than the social life of the children being intrusive or interfering with the academic that it is a general requirement for specific meaning making.

Ann and I Talk About Talk

Despite the fact that a dominant feature of Ann's classroom was small group work, which facilitated spontaneous peer interaction, Ann was not specifically aware of what the children talked about. She set the requirements in terms of the task and the time allocated for it and believed that the children could be responsible within that framework. She certainly monitored what they were doing and held them accountable, but provided tasks and an environment in which they could succeed as individuals and as groups. Ann encouraged and helped them and expected and believed that the children did learn in this environment.

Ann was pleased when I confirmed that in their independent group interactions the children did spend a lot of time talking about various aspects of the topic and task and that they used the decision-making strategies she had modelled with them to solve group problems. As we talked about my observations of the children, Ann suggested that perhaps the children were able to focus attention on the topics and task because they really did socialize at recess. She commented:

> Because I've never really had too much problem with kids not being focused . . . that mall conversation [I had mentioned Ann asking the children to discuss this some other time] was really unusual for them to be doing. I'd say once in three months the conversation gets away. If I can see [the relationship to] what they are doing, I don't interfere. (March 3)

Ann also mentioned that a parent had pointed out to her that she made social studies "personal" for the children by having them involved in activities "they want to do, like the family trees, and the advertising," which were "a part of their life." Ann said, "I'm wondering if those of us who do [teach in this way] have better luck with keeping kids on focus without really having to try."

Ann identified choosing topics and tasks that were meaningful to the children as one reason why their group interaction would stay focused. In an earlier conversation (January 27), Ann had raised two other factors that seem critical to sustaining the children's focus. These were the integration of subject matter through the "theme" concept and the resulting blocks of time this method of organization created. Ann explained,

> When you have the energy of the children focused on one main idea, you can throw in all these subject areas—art, health, science, social studies—concepts from all of that curriculum, but they keep relating it back to one central thought . . . . Now I do it to focus energy. I find that I get far more out of the children if they can spend all afternoon focused on one set of activities rather than chopping it. (January 27 tape)

Meaningful topics and tasks that allow children opportunities to make connections with their past constructs and experiences, a group setting which legitimizes peer talk and interaction, some freedom of choice in what, how and with whom tasks are done, integration of subject matter around a central theme, and blocks of time to work together seemed to be the conditions in Ann's classroom which made it possible for the children to "focus their energies." Ann's classroom provided an environment, as described above, that recognized the social requirements, the social semiotic required for meaning making. The resulting interactions, among which spontaneous peer talk was dominant, provided "both social support and social energy—the capacity for action fuelled by human desire for social communication and individual expression" (Dyson, 1987, p. 397). This "capacity for action" was evident in how the children worked and what they accomplished both collaboratively and individually. Attention span was not an issue in Ann's classroom because it was recognized that as human beings we attend to multiple contexts simultaneously. The children were able to work on "academic" tasks for long periods of time sustained by the legitimization of the social context necessary for individual meaning making to take place.

The Significance of Peer Interaction for Social Studies

If we accept that children are world makers as opposed to world receivers, that they indeed create their worlds, build their individual realities by negotiating meaning across their immediate social and broader cultural contexts, then we must examine and account for the influence of these contexts when we ask what meanings children are constructing about the essence of social studies. If the goal of social studies is to assist children to construct meanings about being an effective or responsible citizen in our culture, a social studies curriculum is only one of the contexts among which children negotiate meaning. The contexts of the classroom, school, and wider experienced world, including the home, will provide a flow of lived experiences which will influence the child's constructed meanings about citizenship. If, as Halliday argues, the social semiotic, or network of meanings in the social world, is a required context within which individuals construct reality, then it could be argued that meaning demonstrations in the social world are a powerful context.

Benjamin Barber comments on the importance of "public talk" for building a sense of community and democratic participation.

> The kind of talk required by a strong democracy . . . is characterized by creativity, variety, openness and flexibility, inventiveness, capacity for discovery, subtlety and complexity, eloquence, potential for empathy and affective expression, and a deeply paradoxical character. All these features display our complex human nature as purposive, interdependent, active, political beings. It is the capacity for this kind of talk that educators need to nourish in students. (1989, p. 355)

Barber also sees talk as making it possible to "invent alternative futures, create mutual purposes, and construct competing visions of community" (1989, p. 356). He states that "political talk is not talk *about* the world; it is talk that makes and remakes the world" (1989, p. 356). Barber suggests four characteristics of public talk: listening and speaking, affect and cognition, participation and action, and public expression in communities of engaged citizens (1989, p. 355).

Barber argues that this type of public talk is the language of citizenship and that children must be engaged in it if they are to engage in public forms of thinking which lead to participation in civic activities. The best way to involve children in public talk is to permit them "to interact together as a group over a question of common concern in a setting where the participants are empowered to make real decisions" (1989, p. 356).

CHAPTER VII

THE CHILDREN SHARE THEIR REALITIES ABOUT THE PIONEER THEME

Introduction

The previous chapter set forth some of the images of the children's construction of reality and negotiation of meaning during the 13-week pioneer theme. Through excerpts from the interviews, this chapter is intended to let the children speak more directly to the reader about their realities of why they think they were studying a pioneer theme and what and how they were learning.

Why Study Pioneers: Initial Interview Responses

Adam

In my initial interview with the children, I asked them why they thought the class would be studying pioneers. Adam's reply revealed he had a sense of the past and of history.

> I don't know . . . because they're already a thing of the past. But still there's some of the pioneer's children and . . . but the pioneers themselves are a thing of the past.

R: So is it important to learn about them?

A: I guess so. Cause if you're learning about the past and stuff and what happened and stuff like that, it's pretty important.

R: So you like learning about the past?

A: Yeah.

R: If you could pick any themes that you wanted to, like if you were Ann if you were the teacher and picked some of the themes, what kind of themes would you pick?

A: Historic themes, like pioneers.

Adam understands that pioneers are "a thing of the past." He has a time context for pioneers and uses the word "historic" in explaining the category of theme where pioneers fit.

Timothy

Timothy's response to the same line of questioning revealed a faith in the relevance of the teacher's choice of topics.

T: To learn. So you can write about it and teach other people.

R: What would you teach other people?

T: The same thing Ann taught me.

R: . . . what kinds of themes would you pick?

T: You mean pioneers and landscapes of Alberta, and that? I'd probably pick landscapes of Alberta, because that's important because it teaches you all the things of Alberta. Of what it used to look like and stuff. I would pick pioneers. Hutterites, I'd probably do that . . . things that are interesting for the kids. That they would like.

R: Do you think it is important to learn about the past?

T: Yes. Not all of it though. The important things like pioneers and Hutterites and things like that but not the, let's see, the people that were poor or something like that.

This last reference to "people that were poor" may refer to some of the readings the children had which emphasized the conditions of Europe that caused people to emigrate to Canada.

Penney

Penney's view of why the theme was being done reflected the same beliefs as Timothy's.

P: Because it's part of school.

R: . . . would you pick a pioneer theme or would you pick a different one?

P: I don't know . . . yeah, I'd pick a pioneer theme.

In response to a question I asked her in her theme journal, "Do you like history?" she had replied, "Yes I do."

Brenda

Brenda's comments on the same questions revealed a sense of the past and a time, sequence, chronology context. This came through, not in her answer to my questions about why she thought we were studying pioneers, but in her comments on learning about the past. It is interesting that it is not clear whether she related the study of pioneers to her comments about the importance of studying the past, which were linked to her own sense of family history.

R: Why is the class studying pioneers?

B: I don't know.

R: If you could pick the themes that you study about would this be one that you'd pick, if pioneers was a choice that you had and you could pick the themes, would you pick it?

B: Well, I'd pick it except I'd just like to cross out the voyageurs because I just don't know anything about them. I wouldn't, don't want to learn about them because then I'll have . . . Well, I don't know, but I don't like them. Yes, I think I would except that's what I would do if I could.

R: Do you think it's interesting to learn about the past?

B: Yes. Sort of.

R: Can you tell me a bit more about that?

B: How?

R: Well, you said it's sort of interesting to learn about the past. What do you mean?

B: Well, you can interview your family with that thing and then when you get . . . you can learn what your own life would have been if you were those people. And then when you get old, people will ask you because they might be poorer or might be richer or they might be the same.

These comments reveal that Brenda had a sense of sequence, time and chronology and also a sense of the way in which the past affects the present.

In May, after the theme was completed, I interviewed the children again and asked, "Now that the time is finished, why do you think you did this theme?

Why Study Pioneers: Responses After Completion of Theme

Penney

Penney was unchanged in her response, "It's part of school." This time, I asked some further questions.

R: mhum . . . anything else?

P: to learn . . .

R: Ok.

P: um different things

R: Alright . . . do you think that's why Ann picked it?

P: Maybe.

R: OK, what about to learn about history, do you think that might have been a reason?

P: Yeah.

R: What does that word mean to you Penney, when we talk about history, what does that mean to you?

P: Old-fashioned, names and old-fashioned, a long time ago . . . and stuff like that. . .

R: And do you think it's important to learn about those things?

P: Yeah.

R: Why?

P: mm . . . well when you get a job or something and sometimes you just want to know about your mother and father's history and what it was like a long time ago so you can maybe make things better in the future.

Penney's response here reveals her sense of sequence, time and chronology and also her sense of the way in which the past affects the future. Her response reflects her belief that what you learn in school will be of value when you get a job. This faith in the relevance of what the teacher teaches was evident in her initial response as well.

Timothy

In the second interview with Timothy, I asked him about the theme on the Depression that he had done last year in Ann's class.

R: Do you remember a lot of things from when you did that one?

T: Well like we each got our own thing to work on about the Depression and some got like housekeeping or what the house'd be like . . . I did the drought. I did the drought. People did . . . Stephen did the grasshoppers and other people did like the hobos and stuff like that. That was fun. And then you'd go take books and get a whole bunch of cards, about that thick, right? and then hafta write a . . . write uuuhhh about twenty of those, take notes about twenty of those and after you'd done that you could write your story and then we got to um we got it, we would have a piece of cloth and then we got to cut out shapes and then, and then put the stuff, like I think down or something that goes in the washer and then if you iron it, it'll kind of stick the stuff on, and then so it'd stay on for awhile, and then we'd sew it and then we made a huge big quilt out of it.

As Ann and I examined what Timothy related about the study of the Depression, we were amazed at his understanding. In the area of content, Timothy used key words about the Depression including "drought," "grasshoppers," "hobos." Timothy also related his learning of a process for note taking and report writing when he talked about using the small cards to take notes and then using the notes to "write your story." He also talked about an activity he had found particularly interesting and fun. He was proud of his contribution to it. ". . . then we made a huge big quilt out of it. Did you see it? On the open house?"

In the interview, I asked Timothy about his report on the drought.

T: Cause I remember like when it got really bad the animals started to chew the fences and like there was all sand and all the machines got buried up on it and stuff like that.

Although Timothy told me he didn't remember too much from his report, as he began talking about it he became enthusiastic about what he had to tell me, and continued with a wealth of detailed information.

T: Yeah and so, umm, when they had their food on the table, right? They had to put a cloth, open it, cause sand would come right in the window sill and they'd have to put the cloth over it and then maybe, like they'd have to open up and then eat it all.

R: That's interesting.

T: I remember one more thing.

R: Go ahead.

T: Well, like if people with long hair, had it all clean, went outside for about ten minutes and if they'd come in, it'd be all sticky and like in chunks.

R: . . . why do you think you did that theme?

T: ummm . . . so you could learn about it. I don't know. Probably so you could umm . . . so you know like what happened in the Depression and if one comes up then you'll know what happened, will happen. You'll know what we do or something. You might study that later on in college or something.

R: And this particular theme on pioneers . . . . Do you see any specific reason you might have done a theme on pioneers?

T: Cause it's kind neat to know about . . . and if like somehow you need to know about it . . . then you'll know.

This conversation revealed a number of interesting facets of Timothy's learning. He knew a great deal about the Depression, particularly about the drought. In answering my question about why he thought the class had studied that theme, he also revealed an understanding of history as part affecting future and also of time, sequence, chronology. His last comment about the possibility that one might study the Depression late on in college, reveals that he understands that what he learns now may help him in the future in another sense; that is, it might be helpful to know about the Depression so that you might know what to do if one occurs again, and it might be helpful to know about it as a basis for one's future studies. It is clear that Timothy believes that what he is learning now has the possibility of connecting with the future.

When Ann and I looked at Timothy's comments, related particularly to the Depression, Ann pointed out that she saw within those comments the major generalization from the curriculum objectives for that theme. This was that we adjust our lifestyles based on changing circumstances and that the past, present and future are related.

Timothy saw intrinsic worth in the study of the pioneer theme. "It's kinda neat to know about"; his next comment again revealed an understanding that there might be reason in the future to draw on this knowledge: "and if somehow you need to know about it . . . then you'll know." He knows he will have the knowledge to draw upon if he needs it, for whatever reason. Timothy seems comfortable with the idea that what he learns now may have uses or significance in the future, the exact nature of which he does not now know.

This exchange with Timothy is also interesting from another perspective, and that is his understanding of history. He does not use words such as "to learn about the past," or "to learn about history." From his responses to my questions in the first and second interviews about reasons for studying the pioneer theme, it is not clear that he has understanding of the past affecting the future or of time, sequence, chronology. In his response to why he might have studied the Depression period this is evident. Timothy had constructed these understandings where and when it had been the "right" time for him, when the current ideas were framed and reframed in his construction system. I might have said that he did not have an understanding about these two aspects of history, based on his responses to my questions about pioneers. The same questions, in relation to the Depression, allowed Timothy to articulate to me the connections and understandings he did have. We need to ask the questions that allow children to tell us what they know.

Adam

Adam's response in the second interview to the question of reasons for studying the pioneer theme was,

A: Guess it was to learn about history.

R: mmm and do you think you learned some things about history?

A: Yeah.

R: Do you think it's important to learn about history?

A: Yeah.

R: Why?

A: I don't know . . . it's important to learn about your past so . . .

R: Can you tell me what history is? What does history mean to you?

A: The past.

Brenda

Brenda's response in the second interview to my question of, ". . . why do you think she [Ann] would pick a theme like pioneers?" elicited a unique and unexpected response. Upon examination of the transcript, I realized that I phrased this question to Brenda differently from how I had asked the other three children. With the other children, I had asked, "Why do you think you studied this theme?" In asking Brenda, I phrased the question in relation to Ann, "Why do you think Ann picked this theme?" Brenda did indeed try to speculate on why Ann would choose such a theme.

B: . . . probably because, they . . . I learned from some pictures . . . these pictures [indicates some mounted photographs in room] . . . [Ann] was telling us a few years ago she, . . . last year, I think it was, she told us that . . . she had another class that did this project and another reason is because she'd like you to go back into our minds and their minds and see if they were the same, cause they were, they're older than us now but we were the same age and something could've passed around or something like that.

Brenda speculated that one reason Ann may have chosen the theme was because she had done it with an earlier class. She also thought maybe Ann wanted to compare how the two classes had been the same and whether or not the older class had passed any information about the theme on to the younger children. This was fascinating because Ann had made a comment to the children while watching the film, *The Voyageurs*, that some of the grade five/six children, when they knew the film the grade three/fours were watching, had said that they remembered that film. Again, Brenda's response to my question cannot be interpreted as any lack of understanding of reasons for studying pioneers, but rather as an honest and creative attempt to interpret and answer the question I had asked of her.

What and How the Children Said They Were Learning

Adam

During the research project, three entries appeared in Adam's journal as he worked on the models and wrote his report.

March 11 I LrND HAW TO DO HAY AND OTHER THINGS

March 17 I LrND HAW TO riT A SPECH

March 18 I LrND NOT TO LeV MY report ATe HOMe

In a March 13 conversation with Adam he told me that although he had liked the previous theme on the landscapes of Alberta, that this theme on pioneers was "funner." I asked him to tell me more about what made the pioneer theme "funner".

A: You get to do all sorts of things. More than Landscapes of Alberta. Because you get to do more things like go [on field trips] and stuff like that.

R: So you like the field trips.

A: Yeah, and I like the things that we do with the clay and stuff.

R: And you like making the murals and posters.

A: Yeah.

R: Do you like drawing and making things?

A: Yeah.

R: How about the centre activities? When you have to, you read the information sheets and answer the questions. What do you think of those?

A: I like it. Because when you're done you get to do lots of fun stuff like make stuff out of different stuff and go looking for stuff in the school.

R: How about writing in your theme journal? What do you think of that?

A: It's nice.

R: What do you like about it?

A: Writing down the things that you've learned.

In our second formal interview, after the theme was complete, I asked Adam again about which activities were his favorite ones and what things he thought he had learned. He told me his favorite thing about the pioneer theme was the pioneer field day. He liked playing tops and marbles and liked skipping, "because I never skipped . . . it was fun." As we talked about other activities and projects, Adam commented they were "fun" and "nice." When asked about his favorite field trip he replied, "I'd say [the pioneer fort] because we got to climb through that hole." I asked more about this, and Adam reminded me that there was a big opening in the gate at the front of the fort through which we had climbed as we went into the enclosure. Adam again said that the reason he liked this was because it was fun.

When I asked Adam about what new things he thought he had learned, he replied,

> . . . lots of things . . . like that the Indians at one time didn't have, you know had rifles . . . because I thought that all the Indians . . . like when I was little, before I learned about pioneers and stuff in grade three, I thought that the Indians didn't have anything but stuff like bows and arrows and spears. I didn't even know they had spears. I only thought they had bows and arrows.

Since the theme had not had any explicit focus on Indians, I asked Adam how he found this information. He said he found "some books and stuff" in the classroom.

Adam said he didn't know which activities he had learned the most from and had no negative comments with regard to any aspect of the theme.

Penney

Penney had a number of entries in her theme journal related to what she was learning "how to do." She also made some reference to what some might consider specific social studies skills.

Jan. 8	I also learned that nobody can draw perfecty and it doesent matter realy how it looks as long as your satisfied with it.
Jan. 16	Today in theme I finaly remembered which way is north, south, east and west. I aslo learned some new places in Canada but I canot rember them right now.
Jan. 26	Today in theme I learned some new things that traditional people in Scotland wear. I also learned where Scotland is and I learned some new names for countrys the names are Austria, Poland and the Netherlands.
Feb. 17	I learned how to make ice cream bisocts and butter
Feb. 24	today in theme I learned how to draw wheat and I learned a new thing in theme for centers I didnt say much but at least I learned something at all
March 9	today in them I learned ~~how to~~ [heavily crossed out] rolled paper logs some shorter some longer to fit on a box for a model of a log cabin
March 10	in theme I helped proceed to make the log cabin and ____ did the roof and made a ~~nice~~ tiny crasy quilt
March 11	Today in theme i learned how to cut straw and fit ito a small bed and also the day was boaring
March 12	Today in theme I learned how to make the plastacene softer by putting it on the heat regester and it would melt or it would be cind of like slip for pots and we made a sod house and finished the log cabin
March 13	Today in theme I didn't learn anything but I started to write my report

The January 16th entry regarding the directions is interesting. Penney was working on one of the optional centre activity cards that day. It included a map of Alberta; a question asked the children to put some of the places where the settlers went on to the map. No reference is made to directions on the map or in the text. Penney told me a jingle she knew to remember the directions.

The January 26th entry reflects Penney's interest in Scotland, which was part of both her parents' backgrounds. Background knowledge and prior experience are evident in the March 12th entry where Penney describes heating the plasticine: "it would melt or it would be cind of like slip for pots." Her parents were both artists and her father made pottery.

The March 9th entry shows Penney deciding that to say she had learned how to roll paper logs was not accurate. By crossing out "learned how to" and making the entry read, "today in theme I rolled paper logs," she let us know that this was the activity she had been engaged in but not necessarily that she had learned anything.

Penney had some definite views on the activities she liked and disliked and about which ones she learned from. In our first interview I asked her if she thought she learned more from the centre activities (readings/questions) or from the field trips.

P: Field trips.

R: Can you think about why this is?

P: Cause you see things and learn from them.

I asked Penney what she had enjoyed most up to that point in the theme.

P: ummmm . . . [the pioneer house], I guess.

R: Why is that?

P: Cause we got to do some things like . . . chores and baking . . . and I liked the carding wool. I liked everything there.

She was able to describe for me in some detail, the activities that I had not been able to see because I was working with another group.

P: Well, we did chores . . . we went out and sawed a piece of wood with a two-person saw . . . I never know what you call it now . . . and we chopped some wood and we got the yoke and we went over to the . . . we didn't get it out of a well but we . . . for hot water and we put it back in the yoke . . .

R: Did you carry two buckets all by yourself?

P: It's not hard . . . as long as you put it here, like that, or else it hurts . . . we made candles and we carded wool and we put it in the small like . . . bag or something . . .

During this interview, I also asked Penney about the centre activities. She told me, as she worked on some of them, that she "hated" them. Ann said she always did such a good job on theme and this response from Penney puzzled us.

R: Tell me about the centre activities . . . you know when you read the sheets and answer the questions, what . . .

P: I hate them.

R: Yeah, you said that before. Tell me why?

P: I don't know. I don't like them.

R: Are they hard for you?

P: No, not really.

R: No, I didn't think so. You don't have trouble finding the answers or writing them down or anything . . .

P: I don't like doing them though.

R: It's just a kind of activity that you don't like?

P: Yeah.

R: Can you think about what it is about it that you don't like?

P: The questions. I don't like writing down the questions.

R: You mean you have to copy the questions over?

P: Yeah, and I don't like doing it.

R: OK. Why? Cause it takes a lot of time?

P: Yeah, I've got the answer but there's always sentences . . . so I have to put like . . . why did Nicolas and Mary come to Alberta? Then I have to put "Nicolas and Mary came to Alberta because . . ." I don't like doing that, that's the part.

When I asked Penney about writing in the theme journal she told me it wasn't as bad as the centre activities but that she wished "it wouldn't take so long." I asked her if she meant to write things down and she said yes. Penney's responses to some later questions about the mural and poetry activity also indicated some dissatisfaction.

P: I don't know . . . I didn't like drawing.

R: Why?

P: Cause it's hard.

R: What's hard about it?

P: I don't know . . I can't draw a good horse or something.

R: You did a good job on the baby carriage and did you do the sleigh?

P: Yeah, except I traced it.

R: You did a good job on the canoe. You put the canoe in there didn't you?

P: Yeah. I don't think . . .

R: No? Why?

P: Cause it doesn't look like a canoe . . . it just looks like a . . . a banana.

After the theme was completed, I talked with Penney again about the activities and experiences they had been involved in during the theme. In response to the question about her favorite activities she was still definite about the field trips and said she didn't like all of them but most of them. She said the early politician's house was boring because, "I've gone there so many times and nothing was new." The provincial museum was "boring sometimes and sometimes not because of the places I hadn't seen before and some I did." I asked Penney why it was that she liked the field trips better than some of the other activities such as the murals or centre activities.

P: Well I liked the murals, sometimes and mmmmm, it's better to walk around and see stuff for me instead of just . . . and listening to somebody say it, instead of just reading and sitting down and getting bored and writing.

When Penney was explaining to me what she had contributed to the group mural on pioneer travel, she said, "I can't remember what I did unless I look at it." I asked her what she liked about doing the murals and posters.

P: It's not really boring.

R: What makes it not boring? Can you say a little bit about that?

P: . . . there's writing . . . .

R: So writing is boring, is that what you're saying? If you have to write a lot of things . . .

P: Most of the time, cause you're always doing it usually . . . and ya get bored of it.

I then asked Penney which activities she thought she learned the most from and she replied, "mmm . . . field trips and sometimes centres and sometimes murals." We followed this up by talking about some of the things she didn't like doing, "sometimes centres . . . some of the field trips, like the early politician's house." And in reply to what it was she didn't like about the centres she said, "sometimes I just wasn't ready to write down things."

Penney's comments on the pioneer celebration day:

P: So-so.

R: What parts of it did you think were good?

P: The games and stuff like that.

R: Which parts didn't you like?

P: Where we had to play hopscotch in your dresses and stuff. It made you look silly.

R: What did you think about the recital?

P: I don't know . . . it was good.

R: How did you feel when you did your poems?

P: . . . I don't know . . . silly.

R: Really, what made you feel silly?

P: I don't know . . . the poem was silly.

R: Is that good or bad?

P: I don't know.

R: And why do you think you looked silly doing hopscotch in your skirt?

P: Cause it would get in the way . . . it didn't look good.

When I asked Penney about the new things she may have learned about pioneers during theme, her reply was:

> Some weird things like . . . I learned on a field trip [about] a piano that plays by itself and the records they had . . . and some of the forts . . . some of the things they did in the trading forts . . . different kinds of things like that.

I also asked her if she remembered any of the things about why people came to Canada.

> Crops . . . pretty good weather for growing and good soil and . . . coal and oil, I think . . . and I don't know.

Timothy

In my first interview with Timothy, about six weeks into the theme, I asked him what he had enjoyed doing up to this point. He said the charts and the interesting centres. I asked him to explain which ones were interesting to him.

T: The ones when, like we would say, at the end it would say, "What would you do?"

R: Problem-solving ones?

T: Yes, those ones.

R: Why did you like that one?

T: They are fun and you get to make up your own opinion and all that.

Timothy liked writing in his theme journal and said, ". . . you just think back and then you just write what you learned or what you like or whatever." He said he didn't like any of the activities any better than any others.

In our second formal interview, after the completion of theme, I again asked Timothy which were his favorite activities. He said these included making the quilt and writing about it, making the murals and going on the field trips. His two favorite trips were "when we went to the place you get to chop wood and . . . where you went to the one where they told about what clothing they wore, at the university building." These were his favorites because, "you got to make the real ice-cream and the butter and then you got to see what the real clothes were actually like—like the spectacles that they wore—and what they look like instead of just pictures."

When asked about what new things he had learned about pioneers or pioneer times, Timothy replied:

> Lots, but I can't remember . . . how they would dress and how they'd wear . . . the girls would wear this tight tight girdle and it would be like straight up and that the boys would have to wear trousers to school. And how they would make their butter and ice cream and

> stuff like that and all the food. And all the people would have to go home and do chores for three hours and then they'd get supper and if they didn't do their chores the whole family would suffer . . . and the boys had their own cow and they had to milk it every day . . . and how strict the teachers were and how they had a whip and stuff and hit your hands . . . and how they would, in school, for spelling tests, they wouldn't have little pieces of paper and the teacher would call it out, but they would line up in two lines and then the teacher would write, say a word and then both of the people on each line would have to go up and write the word and then if they got it wrong, they would have to sit down and then if they got it right, they would go to the back of the line.

I asked Timothy if he remembered anything about the reasons that people came to Canada and Alberta.

> Oh, cause it was . . . there was . . . it was getting too polluted and too crowded at the other place and good farming was getting too much money, so they came here. And they found lots of good farming and good water and soil and once they saw the trees and then they knew it was good soil, I mean water and rain. And on the . . . Canada West pictures they knew it would be healthy cause there was healthy people on them and things like that.

Timothy said he learned "quite a lot" from the field trip to the pioneer home and also from "that university thing" [historical costume collection]. He said, "and I didn't learn too much from when we made the quilt, but when I studied, where I'd write down, like on the clothing and that, I learned a lot about that." I asked him if he thought writing in his theme journal helped him learn.

T: mmmmmm . . . well, maybe. Like when I asked you questions and then you would tell me back and then I might learn something from the question that you told me back.

R: So that would be one way. How about your own writing? Did writing it down yourself make you think of any things or remember things that you might not of?

T: Yeah, when I wrote it down, then I'd even think of more to write down and so I learned even more stuff.

R: Was there anything in the unit that wasn't enjoyable or that you really disliked?

T: Not really any actually . . . sometimes you'd get kinda mad, frustrated at things . . . like sometimes I'd hate sewing and hate doing something like that, but that's just for a day and then I'd like it . . . .

Brenda

Brenda's entries in her theme journal indicate some of the skills she perceived she was learning.

Feb. 2	Today I learned how to do a family tree why they call it a family tree. People call it a family tree because of the branches of both.
Feb. 25	Today I learned that teeth stuff is grouse and how to make a good brocure [the dental hygienist had been there]

In my first formal interview with Brenda, I asked her which activities she was enjoying. Her response to me was to clarify whether I meant what was easy for her or what she liked. She told me that what she liked at that point was the guest speaker. She was particularly intrigued by the speaker's observation that travel was the one thing that had changed the most since early days in province. Brenda went on to explain that she thought it was hard sometimes "to put down your ideas." She talked about the problem-solving activity as being hard because they had to look at the pictures in one location and then go back to their desks to write down their answers. Brenda felt this activity was harder to remember, "probably because they are so complicated." Reading and answering the questions, the centre activities, were easy to Brenda for the most part, "because you have the work right in front of you."

Brenda described for me what writing in her theme journal was like:

> I get a whole bunch of ideas in my head . . . well, I just have swirled in my head and then I go, "I've got it!" Like say I have three ideas in my head and I just go, "today I learned" and then I just look in my

head. I can't do that, but I just do that and then I write it down and then I think of the next idea that I have. But sometimes I forget.

I asked Brenda whether she liked writing in her theme journal better than doing the readings/questions. She said she didn't like one better than the other, that they were both "pretty enjoyable." When I asked her if she thought she learned more from one activity than the other she replied, "I find out more things from my theme journal because you put questions, you put questions. And I know those questions and then that's what I write down in my next theme journal. What I learned from that question or else from other things too."

In our second formal interview, Brenda told me about some of the things she thought she had learned in theme.

B: Well I learned how they dressed . . . I always thought that they dressed in poor clothes . . . that they only had one pair of good clothes . . . they weren't poor or anything. Some of them could be poor, but they only had one pair of clothes, that . . . was a nice pair.

I learned that some ways of travelling was different . . . there was boats and there was sail boats or something like that. They didn't have big machine boats like . . . motor boats and stuff and they had to carry canoes across instead of . . . let me think . . . .

I learned that before . . . anyone was born, . . . people were born, but before Ann was born, probably or when she was a kid or something, that it was hard to get people to come here. Now it's so popular that people like to come here so you don't really have to put posters up.

Brenda said she had two favorite activities in the theme, the "year end party and when we were doing our quilt and we had to answer the questions for that." In terms of which activities she felt she learned the most from, Brenda said, "I think from the places where we went, the activities, I guess." In response to why she thought that was she replied, "Well, I don't know, because it wasn't your own thoughts . . . well actually, I don't know that question." She said there was "nothing wrong" with reading and answering questions but "I just didn't get it all straight in my mind."

> I just didn't . . . I knew it all but some of the things, like some of them tell, told about what different things, except first it was lifestyle . . . just pretend, OK? . . . lifestyle, then how they ate their food and then it was chapter [pause] and then it was food again, and then it was chapter [pause] and then it was lifestyle and then . . . it should have been all one group . . . .

The children's own words allow us to see what was unique and particular about each individual. We see glimpses of the multiple contexts within which the children were creating realities. Having the four children speak through the interviews also allows us to construe what each child made of his experiences that the others did not.

CHAPTER VIII

THE RESEARCHER AS WORLD MAKER: NEGOTIATING THE MEANINGS OF RESEARCH

Introduction

What I came to realize through reflection on the research experience was that in the constructivist tradition, meaning is not "out there" to be "found" like some lost sheep or errant schoolchild, but is constructed by the person through a process of interpersonal negotiation. I, as the researcher negotiated the meaning of my classroom experience with Ann, the children, my colleagues and many authors in the educational realm and in the constructivist realm. This negotiation of meaning took place prior to, during and after the actual time I spent in Ann's classroom and in fact continues three years later, as I continue to read, talk and live in the educational community. What is presented in this chapter are the meanings, for this point in time, that I have constructed about the research experience. These will be addressed in terms of the three original research questions I developed and also in terms of the question that evolved for Ann and I through the research experience.

What Individual Meanings Do Children Construct During a Social Studies Theme?

> Social realities are not bricks that we trip over or bruise ourselves on when we kick at them, but the meanings that we achieve by the sharing of human cognition. (Bruner, 1986, p. 122)

In the same way that for me meaning was not "out there" to be "found" in the research experience, meaning for the children was not "out there" to be "found" in the pioneer theme. Throughout this 13-week unit, the children in Ann's classroom were absorbed in a wide variety of what appeared to be similar experiences; doing readings and answering questions, watching films, going on field trips, participating in "pioneer" activities and projects. Yet, their written and oral answers to questions, their journal writing, drawing, building, their spontaneous talk, and their interactions with Ann, myself and their peers all are evidence of individual and differing realities constructed from the seemingly similar experiences associated with reaching the curricular outcomes for the social studies theme. Multiple realities were created about the content and processes of the social studies theme. Each child in Ann's classroom was creating a unique reality about pioneers and pioneer life which consisted of content and stances or attitudes toward that content.

Penney viewed pioneer life as full of hardships and personal sacrifice. She is very clear in her statements about not wanting to be a pioneer then or now, as illustrated in the following written answers to questions from readings.

Q: Would you have come to settle in Alberta? Why or why not?

> I would not have come . . . even though I could start all over because I would have to face many hardships and I probably would not know anything about farming and because I was not at a job that would give me the experience of farming and the hard work!

Q: List at least five hardships

1. build their homes by hand
2. clear land for farming
3. seeding their crops and hopes for rain
4. few machines to help them
5. if they got sick there was no doctors or hospitals to go to

Q: What would you have disliked the most?

> I would have disliked everything that is listed above.

Q: Why did the early settlers have to be very brave and tough?

> They had to be brave and tough because moving away from friends is sad and they had to face many hardships they may travel a long way to a neighbors and discover that they don't speak their language.

Penney's stance is also evident in the ending of her report on the building of soddies, "It was a task to be done with people not alone. This was because you may not know how to do it and it was very hard work!"

In May, after the theme was completed, the children wrote a district-wide achievement test that combined language arts and social studies. On the test they were asked to write a story and were given the choice of three beginnings, one of which was "Long ago in Canada people lived in log cabins and sod houses." Penney chose this story beginning and wrote the following:

> Long ago in Canada people lived in log cabins and sod houses. In the winter blizzards they got cold and even the heat from the stove could not warm them. These people were called pioneers. Pioneers worked very hard for example the woman would wash clothes, prepare meals, keep the stove running, teach the children when they couldn't go to school, tidy the house, sweep, make beds and almost (underlined three times) all the work you could think of. The men would sometimes went off to find jobs or they would work on growing crops and harvesting them. They wouldn't have all the fresh fruit we have now but their food was alot healthier. When pioneers lived in a town and food was scarce they would share it around. But in some ways I wouldn't want to be a pioneer! The End

In Penney's theme journal, in the second week of the theme, she had written that she enjoyed the film, *The Drylanders*, which had been shown to the children. Ann wrote back with the question, "Would you be tempted to become a pioneer if land cost only $10.00 today? Why? Why not?" Penney's written reply, "No not exactly today because I couldn't handle it myself."

The children had many opportunities to know about the more pleasant, fun aspects of pioneer life (games, pioneer celebration day, the excitement of coming to a new country) but these aspects were not reflected in Penney's writing, although after the pioneer celebration day she did write in her journal that she thought the day was "fun." She seems to think the food was healthier in pioneer times, but other than that focuses on the hardships. She seems to be concerned that she would not have the skills to live then.

Brenda, like Penney was aware of the hardships of pioneer life. She, however, was prepared to consider being a pioneer, but on her own terms. This is a journal entry from the third week of the theme.

> Today I learned that black soil is good rich soil not bad soil like I thought. I also learned that all pioneers didn't have bad crops, some were very happy in the end. Also, I learned that I really would like to have experienced being a pioneer but if I didn't want to the whole time I could come to 1987 and have both at the same time.

Brenda has been able to make a generalization about pioneer life that reflects more than one stance, "all pioneers didn't have bad crops, some were very happy in the end."

Brenda's responses to questions from the readings were:

Q: Would you have come to settle in Alberta? Why or why not?

Yes I would, because there was a train and you can provided your supplies.

Q: List at least five hardships

Hunger, cold, sickness, dryland, no money

Q: What would you have disliked the most?

sickness and dying from it

Q: Why did the early settlers have to be very brave and tough?

Because of the hardships they had to sacrifice [the word sacrifice was not in the reading passage]

Brenda also expressed interest in the lifestyle of the voyageurs after viewing a film on their journeys. She wrote in her theme journal, "Today I learned that the voyageurs slept in canoes and they would wake the rest of the tribe up with a wooden spoon on a pan." When I wrote the question, "Would you like to be a voyageur?", Brenda wrote back, "Yes I would."

Timothy, like the other two children, also had a sense of the hardships of pioneer life. His written answers to the questions reflect this.

Q: Would you have come to settle in Alberta? Why or why not?

> I would come to Alberta because where I lived it probley would of been way to crowded and Alberta had black soil, lakes with fish and trees, that ment there was lots of rain plus free land

Q: List at least five hardships

> They would not like to leave because of there friennds. When they got there there were know more turning back. If they get sick there is know hospital plus they have to chop down all the trees and plow the fields whith very little mackines they had to make there own houses. and if the went to there neighbor that live faraway when they got there they might not speak the same language

Q: What would you have disliked most?

> Diffrent then other people because we would be moving to a foren land when they stay in there normal land and I would miss my friends and might have a terrible school.

Q: Why did the early settlers have to be very brave and tough?

> the early settlers had to be tough and brave because if not they would have to starve in ~~poor~~ crowded country.

Some of Timothy's journal entries indicate his keen interest in the details of daily life and he often used the phrase "it was neat." His stance of keen interest also took the form of question asking in his journal. Timothy's journal became a real dialogue, a real conversation between he and Ann and I. Timothy used the journal writing as an opportunity to negotiate meaning with Ann and I. This was unlike the journals of the other three children. Penney responded to most questions asked, but asked none of her audience, Ann and I. Adam asked no questions either and gave three written responses in his entire journal, the longest of which was "kind of". Brenda asked a couple of questions and did respond to our written comments and questions. Timothy's questions were frequent and revealed a lively interest in pioneer times and a real sense of audience. Timothy's cover page for his theme binder, where answers were kept to questions as well as any other material related to theme, was a drawing labelled "getting ready for the saturday nite dance." It depicted a man getting his hair cut with a knife. His journal entry for that day read, "on Saturday when they were getting ready for the dance they would ? cut each others hair with a knife like they are getting scallped would it hurt getting your hair cut that way?" After the visit to the historic fort he wrote, "I thought the guns were very neat and swords also wouldn't you love a bear fur blanket but a straw Bed wouldn't be that comfterble." Timothy's voice or stance was evident in his journal writing.

In answer to the question, "Would you like to be a voyageur?", Timothy responded, "NO!"

Adam's stance toward pioneers and pioneer life was not readily apparent in his written work. I did not find his answers to the questions about settling in Alberta and his theme journal entries were short and consisted of generalizations rather than specific details.

The children were also constructing stances toward the activities and processes in which they were involved. Each child could articulate the activities and processes he or she liked and disliked and also explain why. The children constructed and were able to express stance in relation to the content and processes in which they involved. While the group work provided a peer forum for negotiating meaning through stance and counter-stance, the apparently non-negotiable nature of the curriculum prevented a public forum for stance and counter-stance on questions such as "why would we study pioneers?"

The individual meanings of the children not only reflected stance, but also reflected intention. The children acted on their own intentions, not the intentions of the teacher nor the curriculum. Although children do learn what we teach them, what they learn is not always what we think we taught them. For example, Adam's reason for the historical fort being his favorite field trip was that we got to climb through the hole in the front gate. Adam had been to the fort many times; on the particular occasion that we went as part of the pioneer theme, climbing through the hole was the new meaning Adam created. When I asked Adam what he thought of doing the readings/questions activities he told me he liked it. His reason for this response was that when he finished this activity, he would be able to do "fun stuff like make stuff." Similarly, after the pioneer celebration day filled with games, box lunch social, costumes and an old-fashioned recital, one of the children wrote in her journal that she had learned that day how to make a curtain for a stage by using safety pins to pin up sheets on a wire strung across the room. Brenda's intentions when she re-drew her family tree twice, were to get a "complete" mark for that project in Ann's book.

Intention means the act of intending, having a specific aim, purpose or plan, from the Latin 'intendere', to stretch out (for). What each child was stretching out for was unique, not necessarily the same as any other child's intentions or the intentions of the teacher. We as teachers can learn much from the intentions of the children and they can learn much from the intentions of each other.

What Are the Contexts Within Which Individual Meanings Are Constructed?

> The social semiotic is the system of meanings that defines or constitutes the culture . . . . The child's task is to construct the system of meanings that represents his own mode of social reality. This process takes place inside his own head; it is a cognitive process. But it takes place in contexts of social interaction, and there is no way it can take place except in these contexts. (Halliday, 1975, p. 139)

The meanings the children created differed and reflected a combination of all of the contexts in each child's life, both inside and outside of school. The children constructed meanings across multiple contexts. What is significant is that the children's constructs were complex; rather than a simple relationship between any of the single contexts, they were a transaction among multiple factors, with the construct being greater than the sum of its individual parts. The children's constructs were not a result of formal instruction only; but rather seemed to be based on all of their previous experiences and constructs. Learning is occurring all the time. Meaning is not constructed on the basis of formal instruction only.

What was occurring because meanings were being constructed in transaction with all of the child's previous constructs, was that the meanings any individual child constructed were unpredictable and not fixed in time in relation to the content of the theme or the 13-week time period. The pioneer theme provided a context for constructing new realities.

That the children's constructs were fluid and changeable was evident as they negotiated new constructs. For example, Timothy rethinking how someone might respond to "Indian people" after listening to the senior citizen talk about how her father taught them to respond without fear to the Indians they saw. Both Timothy and Brenda, who studied "The Depression" the year before, negotiated new constructs about the Depression within the context of the pioneer theme. Those constructs about the Depression provided a context for constructing meaning about pioneers. What is significant from this is that we need to help children understand that our knowledge is not static, it changes through interpersonal negotiation, as we examine our constructs in light of those of others; what are the "possible worlds?" Personal constructs have a past, present and future.

The curriculum was one context within which the children constructed meanings related to the pioneer theme. Although some aspects of the children's realities of the pioneer theme were similar to each other's and to the taught, planned and formal curriculum, other aspects were different. In relation to the formal curriculum reality, some of the children's realities may have seemed "inaccurate" by the standards of more experienced members of our culture and others may have seemed "outside" of the realm of the topic objectives as defined by the curriculum. For example, the first day of the theme, when Ann was asking the children what they already knew about pioneers, one of the children said that pioneer was Latin for foot. When we looked this up in the dictionary, it proved to be correct. Knowledge of this, however, was not part of the formal curriculum objectives nor of the teacher's planned objectives. There were other examples of the children's constructions that went far beyond the intended meanings of the teacher or of the formal curriculum document. This was evident in some of the children's responses to the questions on the readings, where their answers differed from those of the "key" and were far more abstract and sophisticated. This was also evident in many of their journal entries such as Adam's statement about learning that "peasants went down in generations and so did rich people." There are numerous examples from the children's talk, writing, drawing and building where their personal constructions were different from the formal, planned and taught curriculum. In many instances these were not "incorrect" or "inaccurate" but were outside of the teacher's intended curriculum and formal curriculum objectives.

Acknowledging that there are multiple realities of the theme changes how we view the children's realities in relation to the curriculum reality. Their constructions are viewed as possibilities rather than inaccurate, incorrect, approximations, or outside of the intended curriculum objectives. What becomes critical is the sharing of personal realities in order to negotiate the meaning of the topic at hand. The classroom should be the forum, to use Bruner's term, for negotiating meaning. Through this public sharing of personal realities, one creates new personal realities partially consisting of shared meanings negotiated by considering the realities of others. Bruner suggests that what is needed "is a basis for discussing not simply the content of what is before one, but the possible stances one might make toward it" (1986, p. 129). The formal curriculum then becomes not the ultimate reality but part of the meanings available in the culture within which personal meaning is negotiated.

The content of the curriculum was Alberta's pioneers. Ann said, "I've always found with the pioneer unit, and I don't know if it's because of my keen interest in it . . . every class that I've had . . . gets into it . . . we become totally immersed . . . our whole day for a couple of months, was pioneers" (May 5 noon-hour conversation). While it was indeed true that historical content was the object of the children's absorption for 13 weeks, there was never any explicit discussion of what history was or why anyone would study it. I see this as another consequence of a formal curriculum seen as a "given" and as non-negotiable. Implicit in the choice of topic are stances toward the importance of studying history and acquiring particular knowledge about Alberta's history. The articulation of these stances and the examination of them in a light which invites speculation and negotiation was not part of the formal curriculum, nor was it part of Ann's planned and taught curriculum. It seems to me that an examination of these stances which invited counter-stance or entertained other "possible worlds" may be the most critical and essential aspect of any such study. It seems evident from the responses of the four children to my questions about why they thought pioneers would be a topic of study that they were able to speculate and had a variety of stances related to the study of pioneers from "it's part of school" to "to learn" to "I don't know" to "I guess it's to learn about history." Further conversation with the children also revealed that they had a sense of themselves as part of history; "[the pioneers] are already a thing of the past . . . but still there's some of the pioneer's children"; "you can learn what your own life would have been if you were those people . . . and then when you get old, people will ask you, because they might be poorer or might be richer or they might be the same"; "sometimes you just want to know about your mother and father's history and what it was like a long time ago so you can maybe make things better in the future"; "so you know what happened in the Depression and if one comes up then you'll know what happened, will happen. You'll know what we do."

Downey and Levstik, in a recent review of the research base related to the teaching and learning of history, conclude that "there has been a disturbing lack of attention to what children *do* know and to how they came to learn what they know" and that some research suggests that "children know more about time and history than has been previously thought" and are also "capable of more mature thinking" (1988, p. 340). They discuss Poster's work, which postulates an historical time sense that is less related to notions of developmental levels and more related to a "'sense of existing in the past as well as the present, a feeling of being in history rather than standing apart from it'" (1988, p. 337). I believe that the children in Ann's classroom did "know" a lot about time and history and had a sense of "being in history." In a curriculum where the content was presented as negotiable and stances toward that content were explicitly articulated, there would be invitation to examine this and the stances of the children in order to negotiate the meanings of "why study pioneers?"

A theme approach was another context within which the children constructed meaning. This meant that they expected to work in groups, have freedom of movement, be able to talk, have some choice in who they worked with, where, how and on what.

The amount of time which the children spent absorbed in tasks associated with the social studies theme on a daily basis calls into serious question some notions of the length of time children can attend to subject matter. Ann saw the theme approach as a way to "focus the energy" of the children. They didn't seem to have any problems focusing on theme activities for several hours and I believe this was in part due to the fact that they had so much independence to pursue personal interests. Ann felt that the freedom of choice in how they could do something, when and with whom also contributed to the children being able to focus their energies for long periods of time.

Mansfield (1989) reports on the perceptions of a grade five/six class involved in a theme approach. She suggests that the children valued the procedural changes that took place, such as opportunities for choice, more informal communication, and active learning. While these procedural changes could just as easily be used in a subject specific approach, the advantage of a theme approach is that it creates larger blocks of time. Mansfield suggests that both the students and the teacher enjoyed the lack of fragmentation provided by a theme approach. In terms of the variety of activities, she reports that "several students discussed how much they liked being able to paint, build models, write poetry and stories, and watch films rather than always having to make notes in their notebooks as they usually did during regular classes" (1989, p. 139).

The theme approach in Ann's classroom provided blocks of time which made it possible for the children to become absorbed in the subject matter. The theme approach also allowed for a more integrated experience and focus of energy. The activities and procedures in the conduct of the theme provided variety, choice, interaction and different student to student and student to teacher relationships. The result in Ann's classroom was absorption, interest, commitment, energy and completion of tasks. The children had opportunities to construct and convey their meanings.

The children's meanings that we became aware of throughout the theme reflected elements of all the things they had been exposed to during the course of the theme, including content, activities and attitudes. While Ann and I at first thought that it seemed that the field trips and films had been more influential than the readings/questions in meanings that the children were constructing, as we looked at the content of the poetry and murals the children were creating, we also saw the "stuff" of the readings/questions. We decided that when children were given the opportunity to create and express their personal meanings in a variety of symbol systems that they did draw on all the experiences they had been exposed to, including readings/questions. The children themselves indicated that the more active and experiential activities were "favorites" and Penney was definite that she personally learned more from the field trips. She did acknowledge however that she "sometimes" learned from centres (the readings/questions) and doing murals. She also added she didn't learn from all the field trips, because some of them were boring due to the fact that she had been on them before. Adam said he didn't know which activities he learned the most from and Timothy said he learned "quite a lot" from two of the field trips in particular and from writing things down as in his research report on clothing. Brenda responses that she thought she learned the most from "the places where we went, the activities, I guess." Ann's view was that "at the front of their minds are the field trips, but when they are asked to sit down and delve into them [their minds], then all the supportive material I've been having them do in the centres starts coming out." What enabled the children to "delve into" their minds to construct personal meaning or create their own knowledge were the creative activities; poetry, murals, posters, reports, displays, models. For Ann, this was one way in which she reconciled the tension between teaching the curriculum and teaching the children. Although the children had been expressing boredom with the reading/question activities, Ann felt that the mural and poetry activity had been an opportunity for the children to make some of that knowledge their own. Despite the fact that the children had indicated boredom, Ann felt that since some of the ideas they had been exposed to were appearing in the constructions in their murals and poetry, that the readings/questions had not been a waste of time. She felt they could be valid if the teacher gave the children the opportunity to show what they had learned from the materials. After the mural/poetry activity, she commented that she felt better about the readings/questions because "I know I'm doing a good job as far as bringing details and information to their attention and I also feel good because they are making it their own."

"Making it [knowledge] their own" still reflects a stance toward knowledge as external and neglects the constructivist position that meaning is created through a process of interpersonal negotiation. Meaning is created within all of the contexts available within the social and cultural setting.

What is the Role of Language and Other Symbol Systems in the Construction of Individual Meaning?

> Each symbol system—mathematics, the sciences, art, music, literature, poetry, and the like—functions as a means for both the conceptualization of ideas about aspects of reality and as a means for conveying what one knows to others. (Eisner, 1985, p. 124)

The children in Ann's classroom used language and other symbol systems to create and convey their realities. Ann provided, through the context of her classroom, opportunities for the children to use a variety of symbol systems to create and express their realities and negotiate their meanings. Eisner states that each symbol system has unique capabilities and sets parameters on what can be conceived and expressed. This is illustrated well by the children's responses to the poetry and mural activity. The meanings created and expressed were very different from those in the children's written answers to questions and in their journal writing. While activities such as the journal writing provided more opportunity to create and express individual meaning than did activities such as the readings/questions, the mural/poetry activity provided the opportunity to create and express in another symbol system.

The children created and expressed meanings different from one another within the same symbol system. In writing, for example, Penney used great detail, Adam used generalization, and Timothy created and expressed stance and invited counter-stance. In drawing, Penney also sought detail and photographic representation, while Adam was impressionistic in his endeavors.

The peer conversation in Ann's classroom provided a critical opportunity for the children to share their realities and negotiate the meaning of the concepts at hand.

Language and other symbol systems are the means through which we create and express meanings. Symbol systems are our connections with each other; the means through which we are able to share our individual realities and negotiate social meaning. The children in Ann's classroom used the symbol systems available to them in the classroom setting and the broader culture.

The Question of What it Means to Teach and to Learn

The three original research questions were developed by me before beginning the classroom experience with Ann and the children. The research experience provided a context for the negotiation of a new question. This section addresses the question we created through the research experience: What does it mean to teach and to learn?

The social studies curriculum presented a reality of what was important to know about pioneer times. It also presented a view of teachers and children as world receivers. The children's experiences of the taught curriculum, particularly the readings and questions, revealed for Ann and I inconsistencies between the realities of the formal and taught curriculum and the experienced curriculum. This created a tension between teaching the curriculum and teaching children that Ann and I were able to explore. Ann believed that the packaged materials, with their implicit view of children as world receivers, prevented her from exploring the topic with the children, yet she expressed a tension which I believe grew from her perspective on what it meant to be a teacher, "on the other hand, you have to have a plan." Ann recalled a unit worked on earlier in the year, where she had used the curriculum objectives as the "plan" and involved the children in creating the outline of the unit. "I just kept the health curriculum objectives there in front of us and said, 'this is what we are expected to do', what would you like to do to accomplish it?" Ann felt her "hidden" curriculum of meeting due dates, finishing tasks, finding information in written material were possible to achieve through this format where the children had direct input into how to accomplish the curriculum objectives.

During our March 26th noon-hour conversation, Ann explained how she saw that there were perhaps three parallel agendas for a teacher. One was to have a knowledge of the subject areas and to know the "progression of language structures, social studies, etc." and have this available as a reference. Ann saw a second agenda for the teacher as being to "see the children and what we can do for them, enjoying where they are at" and watching them grow from that point. Ann said she thought that seeing the children and what they could do was not necessarily parallel to the curriculum reference. The third teacher agenda as Ann identified it was "to make those other two work, it's actually the middle agenda . . . the one where we allow ourselves enough flexibility in our minds to, to somehow match those two agendas up but at other times to just say to heck with it."

Ann was identifying the tension between feeling responsible as a teacher to a formal curriculum but also recognizing that that curriculum with its implicit and explicit assumptions about children and their development was not always parallel to the children with whom she lived the classroom experience. For Ann, the reconciliation of this tension was her middle agenda, the flexibility to match the curriculum and the children's needs when she could and the flexibility to say, "to heck with it" when she could not.

In our April 13th conversation, after the theme was complete, Ann and I were discussing what the experience of the theme was like for the children. As teachers, we saw the theme as a way of meeting certain curriculum objectives and what Ann had termed "hidden curriculum" objectives such as adhering to due dates and completing tasks. We saw the theme as a whole, consisting of experiences and activities which, when completed by the children should facilitate their growth toward the set objectives. I wondered what Ann thought about how the children experienced what we perceived as a unit or theme. Ann's view was that the children responded to her as their teacher, having faith that what they were being involved in had relevance, "they have faith that Ann has created a learning situation that is important for them as a person . . . there's a faith going on there. The kids presume the teacher has developed something they are supposed to think about. They are going on blindly." (April 13 tape)

The blind faith that Ann described in explaining how the children viewed what they were being exposed to seemed to me to parallel the relationship between the teacher and the formal curriculum. The teachers presume that the curriculum developers have developed something they are supposed to think about. Teachers do not question the views of children, teachers and what is valuable to know that are inherent in the curriculum documents. In the same way children, particularly young children do not question what it is they are asked to learn. When asked why they thought they were studying a pioneer theme, most of the children in Ann's classroom responded by saying, "It's part of school" or "to learn."

Ann's comments about the faith the children had in the relevance of the topics because of the nature of their relationship with her identified the power of the teaching/learning relationship. Although Ann believed that the art of teaching was "to take concepts that are expected by curriculum developers" and make that relevant for the children by "making up activities and getting children involved in experiences," she also was aware that "you can create relevancy on some absurd topics just by the activity that you do." Ann stated that she believed curriculum developers were needed, "I wouldn't want to get rid of them. They are really needed to . . . keep us, on task, that's not the word. But keep us directed." Ann believed that through involving the children in activities and experiences, the curriculum objectives would be accomplished through what she called,

> backdoor teaching. You sort of slide it in and then you stand back and watch . . . and accept . . . and that's exciting because sometimes you get things that you never expected . . . whenever I feel disappointed, my first question is, Maybe I didn't do something right if this didn't happen . . . but most of the time I don't [feel disappointed] . . . I haven't had that feeling for a long time. (April 13 tape)

The teacher has to have faith that the children are learning, just as the children have faith in what the teacher is teaching.

In our last noon-hour conversation, May 5th, Ann and I talked about some of the responses the children shared to the questions I asked about why they thought we did the theme and whether or not they thought it was important to learn about their past. Ann wondered, "Do you think that's a question that teachers should spend time on? Can we raise their consciousness to that level?"

R: It's back to what we talked about before in terms of the explicitness. How explicit you make things. And back to what meaning it has . . . . If at the beginning of the unit you said to the children, "Now we're doing this unit on pioneers. Why do you think we're doing the unit?"

A: Which would be very easy to do.

R: Yes. And I mean you could do that at the end as well. And probably those children who were ready to fit that into their meaning would do so.

A: Yes.

As Ann and I talked about what the children said as they conversed with me about their thoughts on why they would learn about a pioneer theme and why they thought it might be important to learn about the past, their responses enabled Ann to think about her constructs related to the level of consciousness the children could attain in terms of understanding why such a theme would be a part of school and what that would mean to them. The responses of the children indicated that their level of consciousness could indeed be above a blind faith in what the teacher presented. Even by explicitly asking the simple question, "why do you think we might study pioneers?" the children could share their various responses from "because it's part of school," to "to learn about our past" and "to learn about our history." The possibility of some alternate worlds would have been exposed; this could be the beginning of negotiating the meaning of the curriculum topic for that group of children. The same could be done at the teacher level.

As we talked about the children's view of why a pioneer theme would be included in the curriculum, Ann again expressed her construct of the teacher's "constant dilemma." "Our dilemma is to take a curriculum that has been designed by adults and hopefully interpret it so that the children take ownership of it." Ann saw herself as the intermediary between the formal curriculum agenda and the children's agenda which included their interests and development. As we reflected on this dilemma as Ann construed it she wondered what it would be like "if we allow the children to think up things . . . if we said, 'Okay, there is no curriculum, what would you like to do? What would you like to study?'" Ann questioned me about my experience in schools in England, wondering if her notion that the curriculum was less prescriptive was correct. I asked Ann if she wanted to follow that line of conversation further.

> No. No. It's just that sometimes . . . I wondered if . . . I play with this idea every once in awhile, thinking that sometimes I impose my knowledge too much upon the children and then at other times I think no, it's my job to coordinate a curriculum that has been designed specifically to meet the needs . . . their development and stages and that my job is to make it interesting for the children and to give them ownership and create ownership for them. And I guess maybe I, if I think about it all the time . . . but every one in awhile I get this impulse and I think, "Ya, but what if we followed their inner curriculum?" What would happen? I've never had that opportunity. (May 5 tape)

What does it mean to teach? The underlying assumptions of the curricular materials which view teachers and children as world receivers are that a body of knowledge is given, to be transmitted to children and that teachers are "high-level technicians carrying out dictates and objectives decided by 'experts' far removed from the everyday realities of the classroom life" (Giroux, 1985, p. 376). Ann viewed herself as a teacher in this role, yet also was able to articulate the tensions she experienced between teaching the curriculum and teaching the children. The responses of the children to the readings/questions enabled us to begin to confront some of the tensions created by prepackaged materials that view teachers and children as "standard." Giroux discusses this as management pedagogy, "the underlying theoretical assumption that guides this type of pedagogy is that the behavior of teachers needs to be controlled and made consistent and predictable across different schools and student populations" (1985, p. 378). He goes on to say,

> What is clear in this approach is that it organizes school life around curricular, instructional and evaluation experts who do the thinking while teachers are reduced to doing the implementing. The effect is not only to deskill teachers, to remove them from the processes of deliberation and reflection, but also to routinize the nature of learning and classroom pedagogy.

Giroux further argues that management pedagogy ignores that teachers should be actively involved in creating materials and activities that reflect the cultural and social contexts in which they teach, as well as ignores that children, like teachers, "come from different histories and embody different experiences, linguistic practices, cultures and talent" (1985, p. 378).

Management pedagogy, this view of teachers and children as world receivers which was evident in the social studies curriculum, is at odds with the experience of the theme as constructed in this study. Although Ann believed that the curriculum was developed by the "experts," she also felt a need to be an active learner, to create her own themes, and to be able to say "to heck" with the curriculum when she felt she could not match it to the interests and needs of the children. Ann saw herself as the mediator between the curriculum and the children in her classroom, believing that if she provided the appropriate environment and activities, the objectives of the curriculum would be met. Ann was willing to sit back and watch what meanings the children would create and had indicated that she was rarely disappointed. The tensions developed for Ann because of her assumptions that the curriculum was a given, an ultimate reality designed by experts who knew more than she did about what was important for the children in her classroom to know. That curriculum viewed both Ann and the children as world receivers. The actual lived experience of the theme for Ann, the individual children and myself as a participant in the classroom I believe demonstrates that each of us constructed unique realities, that there was no one curriculum experience, but as many as they were individuals involved in that curriculum theme. I have come to realize that the meanings I have constructed were based on interpersonal negotiation with Ann and the children, and subsequent negotiating and renegotiating through reading, writing and talking.

What would a curriculum based on a constructivist stance toward teaching and learning look like? Stenhouse (1985) proposes a hypothetical curriculum in contrast to a managerial curriculum; a curriculum where teachers and children are viewed as world makers rather than world receivers. The curriculum is presented as a proposal which has to be tested in practice, rather than as a given to be implemented. Children and teacher negotiate the curriculum within the constraints present, including defined and mandated curriculum.

Bruner also suggests that education should reflect the spirit of a forum, of negotiation, of the recreating of meaning. He states that from this stance knowledge must be seen as hypothetical and teachers must be "human events" not "transmission devices" (1985, p. 126). Teachers as human events open topics to speculation and negotiation; their stance toward knowledge invites thought, reflection, elaboration and fantasy. Curriculum needs to acknowledge both teachers and children as world makers. Stenhouse says:

> the construction of a personal perception of our world from the knowledge and traditions that our culture makes available to us is a task that faces not only the teacher, but also the student, and teaching rests on both partners in the process being at different stages of the same enterprise. . . . Good learning is about making, not mere doing. It is about constructing a view of the world. (1985, p. 106)

Teachers need to be learners. Curriculum development from a constructivist stance would acknowledge multiple realities as possibilities. Content would be presented as hypothetical, open to negotiation and socially constructed meaning. Curriculum processes would facilitate the creation and negotiation of meaning through a variety of symbol systems. Most importantly both teachers and learners would be viewed as world makers.

CHAPTER IX

WORLD MAKERS OR WORLD RECEIVERS: COMING BACK TO THE BEGINNING, THE SAME PLACE, ONLY DIFFERENT

Introduction

In this chapter, I would like to reflect on the nature of constructivity as I revisit my research experiences. I have refined my original distinctions and have been able to construe distinctions which I originally did not. I see things differently. The source of my current distinctions rests primarily in my realization that constructivists have differing stances on the existence of an ultimate or aboriginal "real" world. Within the tradition of scholars which became my context for the meaning of constructivity, there is the stance exemplified by Kelly and Piaget, that there is an ultimate real world, and the stance exemplified by the current Bruner and Goodman, that there are many real worlds and no one aboriginal reality. The research experience, from the time I wrote my proposal, has been a process of negotiating a personal stance on the nature of constructivity.

Revisiting the Research Stance

When I began my research, I sought a research stance that would be consistent with the constructivist stance as I understood it. I chose the notion of collaborative research because it seemed to me to acknowledge the researcher and teacher working together to make sense of their experience. I began to construe distinctions between collaborative and ethnographic "methodologies" and have come to see that ethnographic methods came out of a social science tradition where meaning was seen to be "out there" in the world. Upon further reflection, I now construe distinctions between collaborative research and a constructivist research stance, which I did not previously. The notion of collaborative research, even as defined by Carson and Jacknicke does not account for meaning making as a sharing of human cognition. Collaborative research still holds an underlying assumption that the "known" is external to the "knower." From a constructivist stance, as defined by Bruner and Goodman, the known and the knower cannot be separated. The known is construed by the knower; each individual constructs her reality. Through a process of interpersonal negotiation we share our realities and come to some sort of agreement on the meanings of them. In this process, our realities are also shaped and changed. Meaning is achieved through the sharing of individual human cognition, individual realities. The distinction then between a collaborative stance and a constructivist stance rests in the notion of multiple realities; a collaborative stance may imply working together to find the meaning of some external reality, whereas a constructivist stance could acknowledge the existence of individual realities, which through interpersonal negotiation become shared meanings. Such a stance creates distinctions between "description" and "negotiation" where "description" implies the existence of an external objective reality, separate from the knower; the notion of negotiation allows us to contemplate the existence of multiple realities where meaning is what we can agree upon through the sharing of human cognition.

The constructivist stance, in this sense, holds tremendous implications for what is often termed theory versus practice in education. The "split" is often construed as educational practice being the "real" world, while educational theory is seen as not "real" in its relation to practice. The notion of multiple realities allows us to see this differently, in that both become "real" worlds to the respective participants. As a university researcher I came to Ann's classroom with my realities, just as Ann had hers. These realities are acknowledged as possible stances; one is not more "real" than the other. Through interpersonal negotiation, Ann and I constructed some shared meaning about the realities we brought to the classroom, as well as about the experience of being together in the classroom. We negotiated the meanings of our two worlds, as well as our shared world. So it was not a matter of theory versus practice, but rather a negotiation of the meaning of our two possible worlds.

I believe that other educational implications follow from this. As educators we need to ask ourselves how and when we have opportunities to negotiate the meanings of curriculum and the daily experiences of schooling. We need to ask how and when we provide opportunities for children to engage in these same activities. Where is there a forum within schools for the sharing of human cognition, the interpersonal negotiation of meaning? Teachers for the most part are physically isolated from one another during the school day. They have no other adult with whom to negotiate the meanings of the classroom experiences. Most, certainly, do not engage in this type of activity with children. For teachers, I think we need to look seriously at ideas such as teaching partners, team teaching, regular meetings of teachers, teaming of experienced and beginning teachers; opportunities to acknowledge the multiple realities of teaching and to negotiate about the meanings of teaching and learning.

The Distinction Between Conversation and Talk

Spoken language plays a major role in our ability to negotiate meaning. I believe that the notion of conversation rather than talk is more consistent with a constructivist stance that acknowledges multiple realities and meaning as what we can agree upon through interpersonal negotiation. Although talk and conversation may be used synonymously, there are subtle distinctions. Talk is strongly suggestive of a listener, whereas conversation suggests a talking back and forth, a two way interchange. Talk derives from Old English meanings of to reckon, to speak and is akin to tell and tale. Talk may be entirely one-sided. Conversation, on the other hand, derives from the Latin "convertere" combining "com" meaning "together" with "vertere" meaning "to turn." Conversation implies a sharing, a mutuality, a turning together, a social interchange of thoughts, a sharing of human cognition.

Ann and I participated in such a sharing during our noon-hour conversations where we negotiated the meanings of our classroom experience. I think it is important to note that our conversations were not externally motivated as a method to do the research. Our conversations were motivated by a mutual desire to make sense of our experiences, to share our individual realities, and to come to some agreement about the meanings of our experiences. I believe that this is also what was occurring when the children in Ann's classroom were given the opportunity to engage in conversation with each other as they negotiated the meanings of the pioneer theme. Through interpersonal negotiation, individual realities are shared, and continuously construed and reconstrued.

Revisiting the Collaborative Relationship

Prior to working with Ann and the children, I had decided on a collaborative stance toward the relationships which would form between me and Ann and among me and the children. I wanted to acknowledge their realities on the one hand, and on the other hand was concerned about what they would "get" from our relationship. It was for this reason that I suggested that Ann be a part of the school district teacher-researcher project. Ann's rejection of this idea and our ongoing conversations where we negotiated the meanings of what she and the children would "get" from my presence in their classroom world made me experience a tension I then identified as external/internal. Ann construed her relationship with me, and mine with the children, as mutual and intrinsically motivated. I now construe my internal/external tension as a distinction between a collaborative stance and a constructivist stance; a distinction between finding meaning outside of ourselves and negotiating meaning through the sharing of human cognition.

Revisiting the Research Questions

I began my research with three questions related to what meanings children construct within what contexts and the role of symbol systems in their construction of meaning. I thought I would find some answers to these questions. The distinctions which I am now making about the nature of constructivity led me to examine the entire notion of the meaning of research questions. The notion of multiple realities and meaning as what we can agree upon through the sharing of human cognition makes it possible to look at the notion of questions and answers differently. From this constructivist stance, questions do not have "answers" outside of the meanings negotiated by people through the sharing of human cognitions prompted by wondering about something. A question created and asked becomes one point for beginning the negotiation of meaning with others. Within this stance, asking questions is a useful construct for talking about the negotiation of meaning and acknowledging multiple realities; the construct of answering questions becomes replaced with the notion of negotiating meaning through the sharing of our individual realities. The distinction becomes the difference between finding answers and negotiating meanings.

The distinction has implications for research and for teaching. For research, this means a different stance; rather than asking questions and findings answers, the educational researcher uses questions to begin the process of negotiating meanings about teaching and learning, recognizing the multiple realities of teachers and children as possible stances. Classroom educational research becomes the process of negotiating the meanings of teaching and learning with teachers and children; seeking some agreement about the concept at hand. Although I began with my three research questions and Ann had expressed interest in the same kinds of questions, through the weeks we worked together with the children and conversed about our realities, we constantly came up with the same question, what does it mean to teach and to learn? This question was prompted as we negotiated meanings about our individual realities of the classroom experience. The beginnings of this question occurred when I began wondering about several of the children's comments of "boring" related to the readings and questions activity. As Ann and I began to negotiate the meaning of these comments, I again construed an internal/external tension. Is meaning outside in the "readings" and prepackaged educational material, or is it constructed through interpersonal negotiation with the readings and with each other? For teaching, the distinction between finding answers and negotiating meanings implies an acknowledgement of the children's individual realities as possible stances. From this constructivist stance, the children constructed individual texts as they read. The answers provided on the "key" were among the possible stances that could be taken. The questions would provide a place to begin negotiation of the meanings of the readings. Questions should open the negotiation of meaning not close it down by implying there is an answer out there waiting to be found, independent of human cognition and interpersonal negotiation.

The readings/questions activity provided the children in Ann's classroom with the least room to negotiate meaning through the sharing of individual realities. It did however, provide the context for the distinctions I am now able to draw between finding answers and negotiating meaning. Ann and I began negotiating this distinction when we began asking questions about the children's different answers to the questions on the readings and their negative responses to doing the activity. The other activities in the 13-week theme seemed to be received very well by the children and were activities where there was more freedom to negotiate meaning.

In revisiting my three research questions, I realize that the distinction between finding answers and negotiating meanings was not clear for me at the beginning of my research, but was a distinction I construed after the time I spent with Ann and the children. Through reflection or metacognition, "this process of objectifying in language or image what one has thought and then turning around on it and reconsidering it" (Bruner, 1986, p. 129), I have been able to reach "higher ground," to see differently. My original research questions were part of the context that has now become my text, just as Kelly and Piaget were part of the context within which

I have been able to negotiate my meanings of constructivity. I believe that, for me, being able to "see differently," to research "higher ground," to construe distinctions within the notion of constructivity required all of my past contexts. I did not "find" answers to my research questions, but rather negotiated some new meanings through conversation and writing. The negotiated question for Ann and me became, what does it mean to teach and learn?

What does it mean to teach and learn within a constructivist stance where multiple realities are acknowledged and meaning is what we can agree upon through interpersonal negotiation, the sharing of individual realities? The children in Ann's classroom constructed individual realities throughout the pioneer theme. These multiple realities were constructed within the unique personal, social and cultural contexts that were a part of each child. These contexts were constantly becoming part of the child's realities. Context cannot be separated from the realities constructed. Through interpersonal negotiation, we share our individual realities. Meaning becomes what we can agree upon about the concept at hand. This all might be described as learning; the continual human process of being open to possible worlds and negotiating the meaning of them with other human beings, thus creating other possible worlds. From this stance, teaching becomes an invitation to negotiate the meanings of the culture. As Bruner says:

> To the extent that the materials of education are chosen for their amenableness to imaginative transformation and are presented in a light to invite negotiation and speculation, to that extent education becomes a part of what I earlier called "culture making." The pupil, in effect, becomes a party to the negotiatory process by which facts are created and interpreted. He becomes at once an agent of knowledge making as well as a recipient of knowledge transmission. (1986, p. 127)

Context is constantly becoming text.

Although the children in Ann's classroom had opportunities to negotiate meanings within the curriculum given, what Bruner is pointing out is that we need to go further. The curriculum itself needs to be open to the process of negotiating its meaning. This needs to happen among curriculum developers and teachers, among teachers themselves, and among teachers and children. The materials of education must be chosen and presented "in a light to invite negotiation and speculation." The question needs to be asked, "I wonder why we would study pioneers?" The stance toward curriculum, schools and education, teaching and learning, needs to be more hypothetical and negotiatory.

In revisiting my three research questions from my current constructivist stance, I have refined my distinctions about the relationship among the questions. Individual realities or "texts" are constructed in the individual's mind, but they are always constructed out of the available contexts that are the "givens" in the social and cultural milieu. Context is constantly becoming individual reality. Meaning is what we can agree upon through the sharing of our individual realities through a process of interpersonal negotiation.

Text is derived from the Latin "textus" meaning "fabric," "structure," from "texere" meaning "to weave." Context, "something that surrounds and influences, as in environment or circumstances," derives from the Latin "contextus" meaning "connection" from "contexere," which is "com" meaning "together" plus "texere." Text means "to weave" and context means "together to weave." The meanings we have woven together, through interpersonal negotiation, are the context within which we construct individual realities. Context, the surroundings and influences, become our text or reality. As we share those individual realities or texts, as we negotiate the meanings, we are together weaving, constructing context. Context is constantly becoming text; and the sharing of text, negotiating its meaning, creates context. This process is irreducible to the parts of text and context. The symbol systems available in the culture are part of the context and text and so also are irreducible to independent entities. Bruner says:

> Wherever one look at the creation of realities, we see the complexity of symbols systems, the dependence of what they create on the discourse on which they are set and on the purposes to which the creation is to be put. Each symbol system is a means for transforming whatever stipulated givens (themselves expressed in a symbol system) that system accepts as input. (1986, p. 102)

Symbol systems are our means of both creating and expressing, conceptualizing and conveying, constructing and sharing our individual realities. Symbol systems are the means through which context constantly becomes text. In terms of my three original research questions, the children constructed individual realities throughout the pioneer theme, within the unique social and cultural contexts of which they were a part, using the available symbol systems in the culture to construct and share meaning. Their individual realities and shared meanings are the irreducible whole of all of their text and context at this point in their lives.

I see one further distinction related to my original research questions. This is in regard to the relationships among the symbol systems available in our culture for the construction and sharing of our individual realities. Language certainly was a powerful system for world making in Ann's classroom. The children constantly used conversation to create and share their realities; certainly, conversation was the dominant mode of negotiating meaning. However, what I have come to see more clearly is that language as one of the available symbol systems in our culture cannot be separated from the other available systems. They too transact to form an irreducible whole, greater than the sum of the parts. Although in our culture, we put great emphasis on language, we cannot use language outside of the other meaning systems, sound, movement, number, art. The construct of semiotics seems to me to be a useful way of thinking about the irreducibility of symbol systems to separate entities. Eisner raises an interesting issue when he states that "except for the specialized term semiotics, we do not have in the English language a generic term that includes all forms of patterned expressions that convey thought" (1985, p. 173). He proposes that because the term semiotics is not part of our everyday language, we should extend the meaning of "language" so that it includes forms of representation beyond words and numbers. From this stance Eisner defines language "as a vehicle that makes it possible for humans to conceptualize and express what they think" (1985, p. 173). Eisner argues that although there are a variety of symbol systems available in our culture, we often educate the young in the use of a very limited range. He suggests that the realities that each available symbol system has the potential to construct and express are non-redundant; in other words a range of symbol systems exists because each is the only vehicle "through which the meanings they make possible can be created" (1985, p. 169).

> The existence of differing forms of representation in culture testify to their distinctive utility for enabling humans to conceptualize and convey to others the kinds of meanings they wish to express. If we assume that the capacity for meaning is diverse within man and common among men, then it seems reasonable to assume that the forms of representation that man has invented are a product of his need to give expression to what his nature makes possible. (Eisner, 1985, p. 169)

Although symbol systems do not operate independently of each other, the realities we are able to construct and share using one system are different from those possible to construct and share in another. Eisner and Bruner make the same critical point that it is not a matter of the arts versus the sciences or affective versus cognitive--all symbol systems are cognitive in the sense that Goodman describes cognition, as including "learning, knowing, gaining insight and understanding by all available means" (in Bruner, 1986, p. 104). Symbol systems serve the common human function of enabling us to construct and share realities. "Thus, when we choose to become 'literate' in the use of particular symbol systems, we also begin to define for ourselves what we are capable of conceiving and how we can convey what we have conceived to others" (Eisner, 1985, p. 125).

From this stance Eisner argues:

> If education has as one of its major aims the development of each child's ability to create meaning from experience, and if the construction of meaning requires the use of skills applied within a symbol system, then the absence of such systems within the curriculum is an impoverishment of the quality of education children receive. (1985, p. 128)

When we ask the question, what does it mean to teach and to learn, we must consider the variety of symbol systems available in the culture for the construction and sharing of possible worlds, remembering that the more skilled we are in the use of the available systems, the richer the variety of possible worlds.

Revisiting the Dissertation Experience—Negotiating a Personal Stance

~~Writing~~ this dissertation has been a monumental task for me; one that has been both frustrating and exhilarating. When I completed my time with Ann and the children, I turned to the solitary task of "making something" out of my experience. I had two notebooks of field notes, 17 audiotapes, hundreds of pages of transcription, the children's notebooks, journals, and stories, slides of the children and activities throughout the theme—I had a mountain of data. I began by scrutinizing and searching that data for themes but it was so complex to separate out themes from the whole of my experience. I tried writing my conclusions, but I couldn't—I didn't know what they were; I hadn't found any. So I just began to write. First, a chronology, a week-by-week look at what had happened in the classroom and what Ann and I had made of it. I searched this distillation for themes; I had a sense that events such as Ann's rejection of the teacher-researcher project and the children's responses to the readings/questions activity held some significance for what I construed as an internal/external theme. During this time, I reread several times Bruner's book, *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds*. My interpretations of what he was saying about constructivity seemed more relevant since my classroom experience and I began to see the classroom experience in light of my changing notions of constructivity. At some point, as I thought of construction of meaning, multiple realities, and the interpersonal negotiation of meaning, in relation to the children and to Ann and me, I realized that in the writing of this dissertation, I too was engaged in a process of constructing meaning through interpersonal negotiation. There were not themes waiting somewhere in the data to be found --there is only the reality which I construct and negotiate the meaning of with my writing, talking, reading.

I did not find themes, but through the dissertation process I have refined my distinctions about the nature of constructivity. More than anything else, this dissertation has been my personal negotiation of a stance toward what it means to be a world maker. The distinctions I am now able to see did not suddenly appear —I required all of my past contexts to come to my current text, my current stance toward constructivity. The notion of personal stance as distinct from view or perspective seems to be of some importance in my constructions.

Bruner says, "one cannot avoid committing oneself, given the nature of natural language, to a stance as to whether something is, say a 'fact' or the 'consequence of a conjecture'" (1986, p. 128). He goes on to say that education should consist of "discussing not simply the content of what is before one, but the possible stances one might take toward it." Stance is a position, a way of standing, to have an opinion, position or attitude. Within the constructivist stance, as I now construe it, stance is part of how each person constructs reality. Stance and reality are inseparable and irreducible. Stance perhaps provides a more subtle distinction than view or perspective where the involvement of the "knower" may be construed as separate from the "known." Part of the process of negotiating meaning is negotiating stance. The expression of stance and counter-stance invites reflection or metacognition. Bruner states that achieving a sense of the range of possible stances is "a metacognitive step of huge import" (1986, p. 133). For it is through this process of "objectifying in language or image what one has thought and then turning around on it and reconsidering it" that we are able not only to accept but to celebrate the existence of alternative possible worlds. This is possible only through the negotiating and sharing of our personal stances, which are the markers of distinctions among possible realities.

So I now see that constructivity means nothing separate from the stances individuals hold in relationship to it. There is no ultimate meaning, no aboriginal reality of constructivity. There is Kelly's stance and Piaget's and Bruner's and countless others before and after them which form the context for my current stance toward constructivity. World makers or world receivers—coming back to the beginning, the same place, only different.

Post Script: World Makers and World Receivers—
An Essential Interplay

I wish to briefly address some fundamental issues raised during the final oral examination regarding the nature of constructivity. One of my intentions in this dissertation was to explore the possibilities of constructivity in education related to the notions of world making and world receiving. I juxtaposed the two notions by using an *either/or* connective, thus suggesting a choice between one or the other of the two. A question raised at the oral examination had to do with the nature of my distinction; world makers *or* world receivers; construction of meaning *or* transmission of meaning. Is it one *or* the other or is there a balance, an interplay; is there a place for both?

Kelly stated that a construct is a discrimination; the ability to see differences, to draw distinctions. The constructs of world maker and world receiver allow us to see and speak about different stances toward teaching and learning.

Dewey addresses the question of *Either—Ors* in his first chapter of *Experience and Education*, "Traditional vs. Progressive Education."

> Mankind likes to think in terms of extreme opposites. It is given to formulating its beliefs in terms of *Either—Ors*, between which it recognizes no intermediate possibilities. (1963, p. 17)

Dewey took a dialectic stance, stating that the fundamental issue was not progressive versus traditional education, but rather a question of what the nature of education was.

> This formulation of the business of the philosophy of education does not mean that the latter should attempt to bring about a compromise between opposed schools of thought, to find a *via media*, nor yet make

> an eclectic combination of points picked from all schools. It means the necessity of the introduction of a new order of conceptions leading to new modes of practice. (1963, p. 5)

In Bruner's conception of constructivity, meanings are made within the meanings taken as givens in the social and cultural settings. For this reason, world making is not a denial of world receiving; world receiving becomes part of the world making process.

So the issue is not world making versus world receiving; in the construction of meaning the culture is transmitted as it is part of the context within which meaning is created. Bruner stresses this when he discusses culture as the *forum* within which meaning is constructed.

> The most general implication is that a culture is constantly in process of being recreated as it is interpreted and renegotiated by its members. In this view, a culture is as much a *forum* for negotiating and renegotiating meaning and for explicating action as it is a set of rules or specifications for action. (1986, p. 123)

Bruner argues that as children become party to the negotiatory process by which facts are created and interpreted that they become "at once an agent of knowledge making as well as a recipient of knowledge transmission" (1986, p. 127).

World making *or* world receiving is not the issue; it is not one *or* the other but rather the distinctions that the two allow us to make about teaching and learning. A denial of one of these notions in favor of the other may result in dogmatic assertions. Dewey states that "any theory or set of practices is dogmatic which is not based upon critical examination of its own underlying principles" (1963, p. 22). He suggests that reaction against opposing constructs constitutes being unwittingly controlled by them. He calls for a proactive stance rather than a reactive one in which principles are formed by a "comprehensive, constructive survey of actual needs, problems, and possibilities" (1956, p. 6) rather than formed by simple negation of opposing constructs. It is through the distinctions that the notions of world making and world receiving allow us to see that we are able to construct other possible worlds.

Making distinctions, seeing differences is critical to the idea of meaning making as a process of interpersonal negotiation. Although negotiation implies seeking agreement about the concept at hand, this is done in the contexts of individual stances, which are markers of distinction among possible worlds. Bruner argues that the ability to express stance and counter-stance invites reflection and is a "metacognitive step of huge import" (1986, p. 133) because it is through this process that we are able to achieve a sense of the range of possible stances—world making *and* world receiving; an essential interplay.

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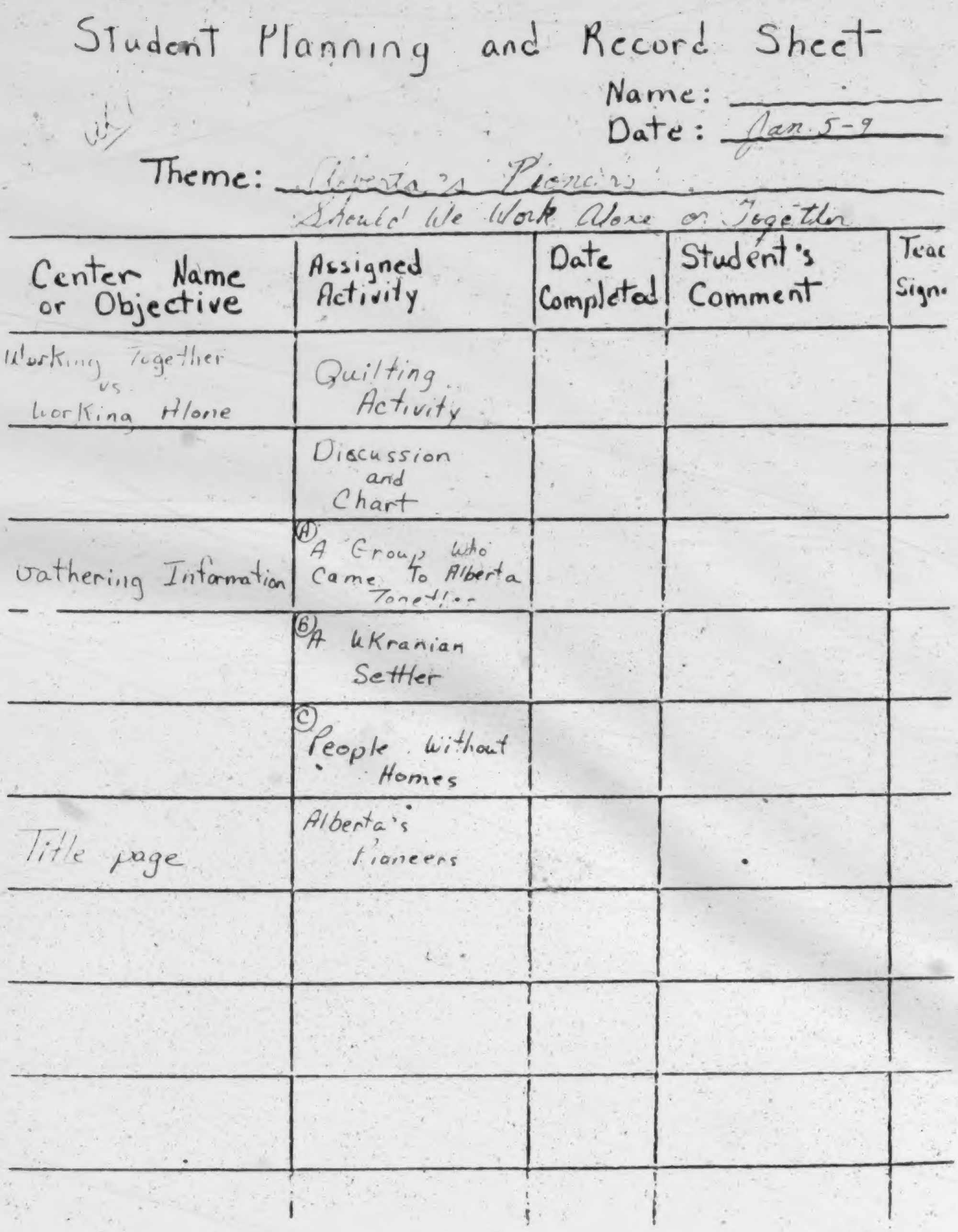
APPENDIX I

SAMPLE STUDENT PLANNING AND RECORD SHEET

SAMPLE STUDENT PLANNING AND RECORD SHEET



Student Planning and Record Sheet

Name: ____________

Date: Jan. 5-9

Theme: Alberta's Pioneers

Should We Work Alone or Together

Center Name or Objective	Assigned Activity	Date Completed	Student's Comment	Teac Sign
Working Together vs Working Alone	Quilting Activity			
	Discussion and Chart			
Gathering Information	Ⓐ A Group who Came to Alberta Together			
	ⓑ A Ukranian Settler			
	Ⓒ People without Homes			
Title page	Alberta's Pioneers			

APPENDIX II

PARENTAL PERMISSION LETTER

PARENTAL PERMISSION LETTER

Dear Parents,

We would like to conduct a research project in the Grade Three/Four classroom. We would be working collaboratively on the research. It would involve observing and interviewing the children and collecting their written work, drawing, projects, etc. as they work through a unit of social studies (theme). We are interested in how children construct meaning, particularly in how talk, writing, drawing, making things, contributes to learning. This research project will not disrupt what would be happening naturally during the course of the social studies unit.

We would like to ask your permission to observe the class your child is in and to ask the children questions about what and how they are learning during the social studies unit. Information related to particular children will be confidential, as will the names of the children, teachers, and the school involved. This research would be conducted over the next nine weeks during all times related to the theme being studied.

This research will be used as part of a doctoral dissertation. We would be pleased to answer any questions or provide you with further information.

PLEASE SIGN BELOW TO INDICATE YOUR PERMISSION. THANK YOU!

Sincerely,

____

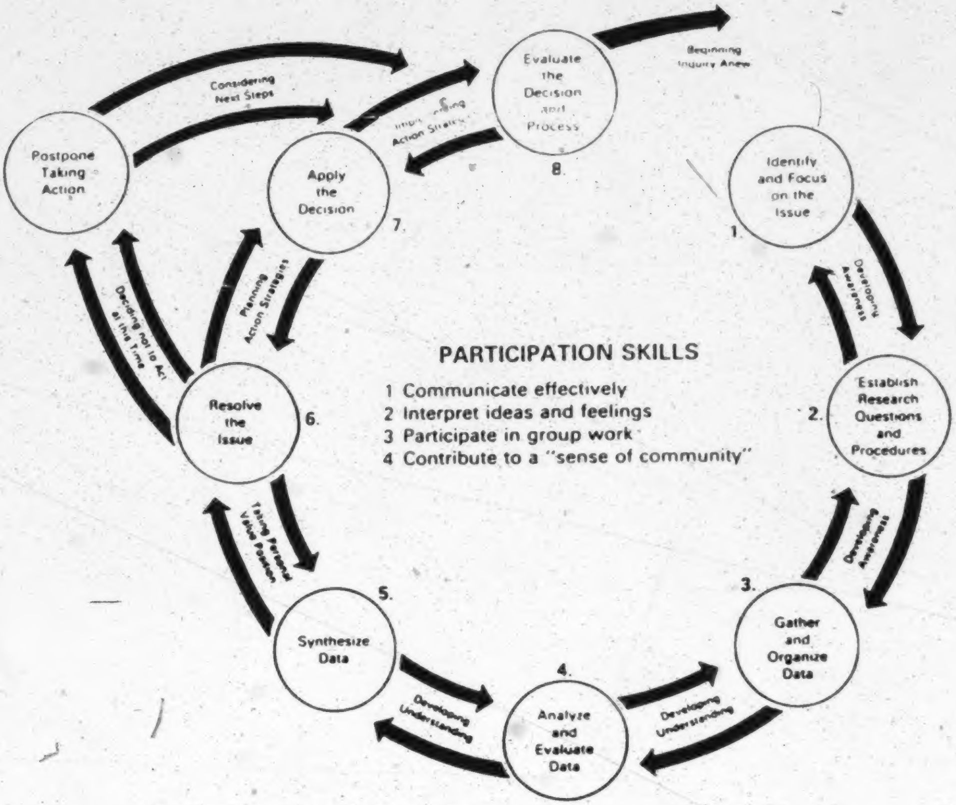
NAME OF CHILD ____________________________________

YES __________ NO __________ FURTHER INFORMATION __________

APPENDIX III

A PROCESS FOR SOCIAL INQUIRY

A PROCESS FOR SOCIAL INQUIRY


Evaluate the Decision and Process
8.
Beginning Inquiry Anew
Identify and Focus on the Issue
1.
Developing Awareness
Establish Research Questions and Procedures
2.
Developing Awareness
Gather and Organize Data
3.
Developing Understanding
Analyze and Evaluate Data
4.
Developing Understanding
Synthesize Data
5.
Taking Personal Value Position
Resolve the Issue
6.
Deciding not to Act at this Time
Planning Action Strategies
Apply the Decision
7.
Implementing Action Strategies
Postpone Taking Action
Considering Next Steps

PARTICIPATION SKILLS

1 Communicate effectively
2 Interpret ideas and feelings
3 Participate in group work
4 Contribute to a "sense of community"

INTERPRETATION OF FIGURE I

The system of two-way arrows indicates that progress through the process of inquiry is not lock-step. During inquiry, as an issue takes on a new perspective, students will frequently find it necessary to "double back" to steps covered previously. Social studies students, like researchers and citizens intent on resolving social problems, should be guided by a purposeful and systematic approach to problem-solving while allowing for deviations in procedures on the basis of intuition, dead-ends and such realities as schedules and available resources.

Source: 1981 Alberta Social Studies Curriculum. Edmonton: Alberta Education.

APPENDIX IV

GRADE THREE CURRICULUM TOPIC

TOPIC B: LIFESTYLES OF CANADIANS IN OTHER TIMES

GRADE THREE
LIFESTYLES IN OTHER TIMES AND PLACES

In this topic, students inquire into issues related to community life during the times of early settlers. The study should focus on the lifestyles of community members in past generations, and the balance they sought between working together and independently as they strove to achieve their goals and aspirations. Students should draw comparisons between then and now to assess the changes that have taken place over the years in their own communities.

Competing Values and Social Issue

Self-Reliance/Co-operation
Should we work alone or together?

VALUE OBJECTIVES	KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVES	SKILL OBJECTIVES
Students will examine the social issue in order to develop the following understandings, competencies, and attitudes. *(Questions in italicized print are illustrative only.)*	Students will gain understanding of the following generalization and concepts, as well as factual information appropriate to the inquiry questions that are listed.	Students will develop competence in the following inquiry and participation skills. Skills printed in standard type are emphasized for this topic.
1. **Develop Understanding of Values** 1. Describe examples of personal behaviour which reflect the values of self-reliance and or co-operation. — *Describe situations where you worked alone because you thought it was important to do something by yourself.* — *Describe situations where you worked with other people because you thought it was important to co-operate.* 2. Describe historical situations in which self-reliant behaviour was evident and situations in which co-operative behaviour was demonstrated. — *What were some things that settlers did by themselves?* — *What were some things that settlers did in co-operation with others?* 2. **Develop Competencies** 1. In decision-making, by choosing between the conflicting values of self-reliance and co-operation in situations where both have advantages and disadvantages	1. **Generalization** **The lifestyles of early settlers were characterized by the need to balance co-operation with self-reliance in order to achieve their goals and aspirations.** 2. **Concepts** 1. Lifestyles 2. Settlement 3. Goals/aspirations 4. Change 5. Community 3. **Questions to Guide Inquiry** 1. **When did the first people come to what is now our community? Who were some of these people? Where did they come from? How did they get here?** 2. **Why did people come to our community? What were their goals and aspirations?** 3. **How did the settlers decide where to build a new community?** 4. How did the settlers satisfy their basic needs?	1. **Develop Inquiry Skills** 1. Focus on the issue by paraphrasing the problem and stating two alternatives. 2. *Formulate procedures for selecting sources and gathering information on community history, in a whole class planning session.* 3. Gather and organize data by — reading and interpreting simple historical accounts which describe past lifestyles. — interviewing parents/community resource people for information on community history. — recording interview data in categories on a retrieval chart. — recording events in the community's history on a simple time line. 4. Analyze data by comparing lifestyles of people in settlement times to lifestyles in the community today, using the concepts of self-reliance and co-operation as criteria.

— *Imagine a situation in which it is hard to decide between self-reliance and co-operation. What would be the advantages and disadvantages of each? Which value do you prefer?* 2. In decision-making, by identifying appropriate actions in school, home and neighborhood consistent with one's chosen value. — *Given the value preference you have chosen (self-reliance or co-operation), what are some things you could do at school, at home, and in the neighborhood to show your preferred value? What are some things you might have done as a settler to show your preferred value?* 3. **Develop Attitudes** 1. Of objectivity, by demonstrating a willingness to consider the advantages and disadvantages of both self-reliant and co-operative behaviour in a particular situation.	5. In what ways did people work alone? Work together? 6. Why did they choose to work alone at times and work together at other times?	5. Synthesize data by — summarizing information about community changes on an experience chart. — relating causes and effects of community changes over time. 6. Resolve the issue by — formulating alternative solutions for working co-operatively or alone in school, home, neighborhood. — analyzing the values inherent in each alternative. 7. Apply the decision by choosing to work alone or together on a given project. 8. *Evaluate the way the issue was resolved as compared with other ways decisions can be made (e.g., by the teacher, by majority vote, by total consensus).* 2. **Develop Participation Skills** 1. Communicate effectively by — composing a paragraph or two to report on some aspects of life in settlement times. — drawing, or collecting and showing, pictures of ways in which lifestyles have changed. 2. Interpret ideas and feelings by — listening to the ideas of others about preferred ways of working alone or together. — demonstrating understanding of problems faced by others in adjusting to community change. 3. *Participate in group decision-making by using consensus to select courses of action for working together.* 4. Contribute to a "sense of community" by assisting in group projects for activities like making quilt plans and conducting surveys.

Source: 1981 Alberta Social Studies Curriculum. Edmonton: Alberta Education.

APPENDIX V

GRADE FOUR CURRICULUM TOPIC

GRADE FOUR
ALBERTA, OUR PROVINCE

TOPIC B: ALBERTA, PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE: OUR HUMAN RESOURCES

In this topic, students examine issues related to lifestyles in Alberta. Background information should be drawn from four periods in Alberta's history: Early Settlement, the Depression, the War Years, and Modern Times. Students should become aware of trends in occupations, leisure time activities, skills, interests, and education as Albertans continue to adjust their lives to meet new challenges in an increasingly industrialized society. They should be encouraged to make predictions about the future and how their own lives may be influenced by these trends.

Competing Values and Social Issue

Productivity/Leisure
How should Albertans adjust their lifestyles to meet new opportunities and challenges?

VALUE OBJECTIVES

Students will examine the social issue in order to develop the following understandings, competencies, and attitudes. (*Questions in italicized print are illustrative only.*)

1. **Develop Understanding of Values**
   1. Identify productivity and leisure as values influencing the activities of Albertans, past and present.
      — *What was important to Albertans in their work in the past? How did this affect their leisure time activities?*
   2. Define the meaning of work and leisure to different people in the past, present and future.
      — *Which activities were considered work, and which leisure to Albertans in earlier historical eras? How do we define work and leisure today? How may we define it in the future?*
   3. Describe student activities in the past which show that Alberta students valued both work and leisure.
      — *How did student activities in the past reflect what Albertans thought was important? How do they reflect what we think is important today?*

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVES

Students will gain understanding of the following generalization and concepts, as well as factual information appropriate to the inquiry questions that are listed.

1. **Generalization**

   A balance between work and leisure activity is important to human welfare. The nature of work and leisure has changed as society has become increasingly industrialized.

2. **Concepts**
   1. Change
   2. Lifestyle
   3. Occupation
   4. Leisure time
   5. Productivity
   6. Resourcefulness

3. **Questions to Guide Inquiry**
   1. When did some of the large groups of settlers come to Alberta? Where did they settle? Why did they settle in particular places?
   2. What were some of the problems faced by early settlers? How were these problems overcome? How did the early settlers integrate both work and leisure into their lifestyles?

SKILL OBJECTIVES

Students will develop competence in the following inquiry and participation skills. Skills printed in standard type are emphasized for this topic.

1. **Develop Inquiry Skills**
   1. *Identify the social issue and its competing values from a class discussion about how Albertans are attempting to respond to change today.*
   2. Formulate research questions to guide information-gathering on Albertans' lifestyles in various historical eras.
   3. Gather and organize data by
      — reading and interpreting historical maps for information on locations of settlements and travel routes in early Alberta.
      — interpreting contemporary and historical documents to gain perspectives on lifestyles in various historical eras.
   4. Analyze and evaluate data by explaining different viewpoints about historical events and episodes.
   5. Synthesize data by summarizing information about changes in work and leisure in the past, and deducing logical conclusions about changes that may occur in the future.

2. Develop Competencies

1. In value analysis, by comparing different views on the kinds of human resources Albertans may need for the future
   - — *What might the following Albertans say are important human resources (skills, attitudes, etc.) to enable us to cope with the future? How might they react to the idea that education should prepare us for work? For leisure? Why is that? What changes might each of them make to our schools?*
     - *a musician or artist*
     - *a business owner*
     - *a sales person*
     - *a professional hockey player*
     - *a civilian in World War II*
     - *a man on "relief" in 1933*
     - *a homesteader in 1900*

3. Develop Attitudes

1. Of positive self-concept, as someone capable of developing a balance between work and leisure activities.
2. Of appreciation for the variety of ways in which people of the past and present have tried to create a balance between work and leisure activities.
3. Of open-mindedness, by being willing to question the views of others on a proper balance between work and leisure.

3. What was the Great Depression and when did it happen?
4. How did the Great Depression affect the lives of people in Alberta? What changes did people have to make in their lifestyles to cope with conditions during the Great Depression?
5. What was World War II and when did it take place?
6. How did World War II affect the lives of people in Alberta? What changes did people have to make in their lifestyles to cope with conditions during World War II?
7. What are some ways in which lifestyles today differ from lifestyles during the settlement era, the Great Depression and World War II? Are there differences in such areas as employment, leisure time activities, education, and availability of material goods?
8. What might life be like when today's grade four students are adults? Might there be new and different kinds of occupations, leisure time activities and ways to learn new skills?

6. Resolve the issue by considering how young Albertans should adjust to meet new opportunities and challenges.
7. *Apply the decision by creating a plan to adjust to a specific challenge or opportunity facing the class.*
8. *Evaluate the action in terms of its possible positive and negative effects on the class and, if relevant, other classes, teachers, etc.*

2. Develop Participation Skills

1. Communicate effectively by orally expressing opinions about the use of work and leisure time.
2. Interpret ideas and feelings of others by demonstrating an understanding of different decisions made about adjustment to change at the personal level.
3. *Participate in small group work and decision-making by helping in*
   - — *dividing up the task, assigning jobs and evaluating group performance.*
   - — *coordinating the assignment of individual tasks.*
4. *Contribute to a "sense of community" through suggestions and actions designed to give the classroom a "better" balance of work and relaxation (celebration, play, etc.).*

Source: 1981 Alberta Social Studies Curriculum. Edmonton: Alberta Education.